# Valley Voice

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## Visalia City Council Covers a Lot of Ground During Recent Meeting

**Catherine Doe**

On April 6 the Visalia City Council held a marathon city council meeting that included several public hearings, increased developer's impact fees and rejected a change to a city ordinance. The meeting took place at the convention center in anticipation of larger-than-normal crowds for the public hearing about dividing the city into voting districts. That did not end up to be the case, as just as many of the more 100 attendees came to comment on a zoning change, a new hospitality contractor for the convention center, and an ordinance to allow city council members to challenge decisions by the planning commission.

### Marriott Hotel to have new owners

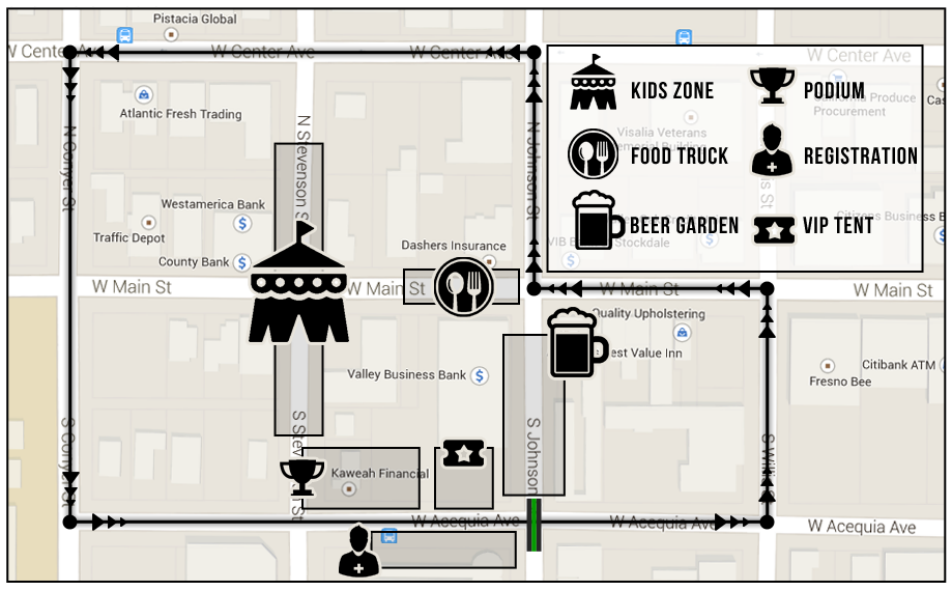
### City signs new contract with the Welcome Group

The City of Visalia might have lost the Marriott Hotel if a new owner had not come forward. Leslie Caviglia, assistant city manager, asked the council to approve a shared use agreement between the Welcome Group, the new owner of the hotel, and the convention center. The former owner, Presidian, could not make the required upgrades needed to keep the Marriott name. The Welcome Group has committed to putting $5 million of renovations into the Marriott Hotel and setting aside a large number of rooms at a discount price to attract conventions. The City of Visalia also plans on putting several million into renovations to the convention center.

The shared use agreement would give the Welcome Group priority booking and catering in the Charter Oak Room of the convention center. Several members of the audience objected to the Welcome Group receiving priority booking and catering. Anil Chagan, owner of Comfort Suites on Acequia Ave., explained to the council that he books several events a year in the Charter Oak Room and that he will lose those groups if he does not have it available. He said that anyone with a large group should be able to book the Charter Oak Ballroom, not just the Welcome Group. The convention center has other rooms available but they are all significantly smaller.

Sue Sa, of Sue Sa's Creative Catering, said that she has been the main caterer for the convention center for 15 years. The new agreement would mean the Welcome Group would be the sole caterer. Sa explained that she normally caters 25 to 30 events a year at the convention center and that businesses want a choice as to who is going to cater their event. Chagan mentioned that many groups prefer the Vintage Press to cater their events and would not want to be

**MARATHON MEETING** continued on **5 »**




## Sequoia Cycling Classic Returns to Downtown Visalia

**Nancy Vigran**

The Sequoia Cycling Classic returns to downtown Visalia, Sunday, April 26 with 400-500 riders expected to participate.

"Everything is on track," said Eric Henson, event organizer.

And, as in the past, the Sequoia Cycling Classic "is more than a race," Henson said. "It is an event!"

In general, when cyclists compete, they are on a designated track in an industrial area lacking in spectators.

"At many races there may be 40 people watching" Henson said. "We're going to have 5,000!"

Henson explained that having a crowd cheer the riders on, aides in their drive and desire, and makes the race more exciting.

"We want spectators," he said.

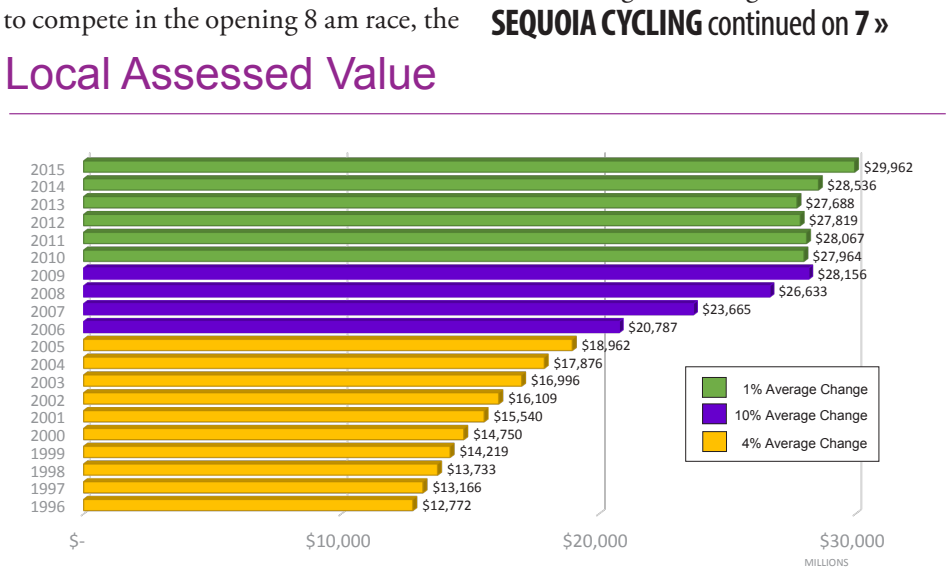
The "event" will include sanctioned racing in all levels of competition for men and women. Newbies are welcome to compete in the opening 8 am race, the Elite 5, as long as they are fit to ride a 30-minute race. Rules and tips for safe racing will be explained before that particular race by Greg Tripoli, an experience race and mentor.

As the day progresses, the races get faster, culminating in the Pro I/II. This is where many of the better known cyclists may be competing including local Shaun Bagley, co-organizer of the event. Bagley is a Category II racer; Henson is Category III. While both men will have a very busy day, they both plan on competing in their race categories, and hope to have the hometown crowd behind them.

The 0.7 miles course starts at Acequia and Johnson, and travels counterclockwise in a boot-shape around downtown.

A couple free children's races break-up the day, during the noon hour. A 50-meter race is open to ages 2-5, and a one-lap race for children, 7-14. There is no formal entry for these, and children are encouraged to bring their own bikes

**SEQUOIA CYCLING** continued on **7 »**




## Tulare County in Sound Fiscal Condition

**Catherine Doe**

At the April 7 Tulare County Board of Supervisors meeting, Jean Rousseau, county administrative officer, presented the county's mid-term budget. The General Fund Fiscal Outlook for 2015-16 looks cautiously positive as the county is steadily recovering from the Great Recession.

Rousseau attributed Tulare County's positive financial position to its conservative approach to spending and saving money. There is static to slow growth in the housing and commercial markets, and statewide sales taxes are still growing, but at a moderate rate. There has been an increase in local sales taxes over the calendar year.

The biggest impacts to the county's budget are property taxes, retirement costs, worker's compensation costs and the drought.

Property taxes provide two thirds of

**TULARE COUNTY** continued on **7 »**

## Area Gets a Voice on California Water Commission

**Dave Adalian**

With the worsening drought much on the minds of Californians, Visalia has added another voice in the state's approach to water regulation with the appointment of Maria Herrera, 32, to the California Water Commission (CWC).

Maria Herrera

"I'm very excited," Herrera said of the announcement by Gov. Jerry Brown's office late last month. "I'm honored to be chosen, and I know it's a big commitment."

She joins two other Valley residents already on the nine-person commission--Dave Orth of the Kings River Conservation District, and west-side farmer Joe Del Bosque.

Herrera underwent a series of interviews, gathered letters of support and was subjected to a background check before being selected to fill the vacancy. Her appointment still requires approval by the State Senate, yet she has already attended her first meeting of the agency tasked with approving water regulations and rules, advising the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and creating a forum for public input.

"I'm getting up to speed," Herrera said.

### Overseeing Water Bond Spending

The CWC is also overseeing spending some $2.7 billion set aside for water storage project development through the Water Storage Investment Project. The funding is part of the Prop 1 Water Bond passed by voters in November of last year.

"Our job is to work with the DWR and the public to develop the program," Herrera said. "We're working on getting together studies for water proponents."

Herrera said the CWC process will be both "transparent" and "stakeholder-driven" as it decides which of the various storage proposals will receive funding. Among the stakeholders she hopes to see represented are the general public, as well as groups with vested interest in the future of water here, such as the California Farm Bureau, the Western Growers Association, various tribal groups and organizations that represent Hispanic water users.

"We're going to spend the next few months getting the guidelines at least formed by October," Herrera said, who added that the final documents should be completed by year's end.

The group will also be overseeing implementation of the recently enacted Groundwater Management Act, which requires water agencies to develop

**WATER COMMISSION** continued on **5 »**

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FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

## Music to My Ears

Frustratingly, I remain the worst musician in the history of sound. Practice, which is supposed to make for Perfect, in my case only gives rise to noise. But what's worse than maladroit fingering is my memory. It does not linger. I resume with my favorite guitar, a semi-hollow custom dual split-coil Telecaster, and can almost never recall the song in my head--especially if it's one of my own. A few years ago, for instance, I wrote a tune for an old friend's birthday--her 50th, I want to say--called, I think, "Esplanade Nostlagique." I remember, at least, having liked the melody.

The other day, just for fun, I tried to play it. Some fun! Either I'm staggeringly ungifted, musically speaking, or else teetering on the verge of senility. Of course it's the former--I am capable, apparently, of helping to run this newspaper. But I digress. After fits and starts--trial and error, really--I was almost able to reproduce the song. Almost. Among the most bitter frustrations was the knowledge that a whole phrase had just vanished. Poof! No amount of noodling could resurrect it. It was locked way back in, say, the old medulla oblongata. After about a week's torment the phrase at last came floating, effortlessly, as if from the ether: A, C#, D, E, A.

Our youngest son's relationship with music is a polar opposite to mine. For starters, he's a virtuoso on the guitar. He can play behind his back, like Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughn and, perhaps most daunting, can play my guitars with ease--and I am left-handed. I'll write something and he'll say, "Here, Dad--let me show you how to play it."

But this talent I think is best demonstrated by his memory. He seemingly remembers everything he's ever played. Once, when I was similarly stuck on a chord of yet another vintage tune of mine, he walked into the room and said, simply, "D7."

I love a simple statement. Who doesn't? In our family we still chuckle over a few favorites: "Fish don't sit." "You won't be finished until you're through." "He walks like Grandpa." But the new chart-topper, shouted across the house a few days ago by my wife, goes something like this: "--Joseph! We don't owe anything in taxes this year!"

Music to my ears!

We purchase no missile, no bullet or drone. Afghanistan writes no checks against us. Hot damn!

Still, this does not mean we have any more money; it means, alas, that we have less debt.

And we can thank my wife's side of the family. According to our new accountant, their withholding from her tens of thousands of dollars in farm income--a bracket-crashing sum--allowed the many deductions and expenditures of a very difficult 2014 to level our balance at zero.

But this also means we could not send our youngest son to music school after he withdrew from the University of Arizona to follow his passion.

He's home here with us, playing and recording original music in his tiny room. He sells an occasional ad for the *Valley Voice*. He watches television. He works out at the gym.

Yet in spite of it all--in spite of an eviction and a related court appearance, a forced relocation, and the forced postponement of his dreams--he whistles. He sees how his mother has been treated and, powerless to counteract it, he whistles. It isn't defiance, and it is not whistling, as they say, past the graveyard. He whistles absent-mindedly, with total contentment, tunes that come to him as if from the cosmos. He whistles things he wrote, things I wrote, and things he has heard on the radio--and all with a happy abandon.

THAT is music to my ears.

*— Joseph Oldenbourg*

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# Political Fix

Catherine Doe

## Six Things You Didn't Know About Marco Rubio

Well finally we have some officially declared presidential candidates. The first to announce was Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, then Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, Hilary Clinton and now Florida Sen. Marco Rubio. Neurosurgeon Ben Carson has announced that he is definitely going to announce, so we have that to look forward to.

The freshman senator, Mr. Rubio was the latest to jump into the race, so let's review six thing you probably didn't know about him.

1. Mr. Rubio sponsored a comprehensive immigration reform law that passed the senate and included amnesty.
2. Rubio's election to the senate in 2010 was partly due to the Tea Party whose influence convinced him to withdraw support from his own immigration bill and it died in the house.
3. Mr. Rubio is giving up the chance to keep his senate seat to run a very long-shot campaign for the presidency.
4. Ms. Clinton's advisors are watching Mr. Rubio very closely as her potential opponent. Her announcement on Sunday was an attempt to draw attention away from Mr. Rubio and eclipse it.
5. Mr. Rubio graduated high school with a 2.1 grade point average.
6. Mr. Rubio's family was Mormon while they lived in Las Vegas. He is now Catholic.

Kentucky Senator Rand Paul jumped into the race in April also. Here are his little known facts.

1. Mr. Paul spent his second day as an official presidential candidate trashing Ms. Clinton.
2. Ms. Clinton spent her second day as an official presidential candidate barely aware of Sen. Paul's existence.
3. Rand Paul said in a campaign video that, "he will do anything to defend America from 'Haters of Mankind,' you know- like the Klingons.
4. He is afraid of heights.
5. Sometimes he cuts his own hair.
6. Sarah Palin declared that she is on "Team Rand."

Sen. Ted Cruz, I predict, will never disappoint in providing material for this column, and is the barer of many unknown facts.

1. While at Harvard Law, Cruz reportedly refused to study with anyone who hadn't spent their undergrad years at Harvard, Princeton or Yale.
2. His favorite boots are black ostrich-skin cowboy boots.
3. He argued in front of the Court of Texas to keep the Ten Commandments monument on the Texas State Capitol grounds.
4. He memorized the Constitution as a teenager and recited it across the state.
5. James Carville called Mr. Cruz "the most talented and fearless Republican politician I've seen in the last 30 years."
6. When you Google "the most hated man in congress" Ted Cruz is the first name to pop up.

Hilary was our latest to declare. The New York Times said, "the prolonged prologue to Hilary Clinton's second run for the White House will reach its suspenseless conclusion on Sunday."

There is no need to make a list like the above. With a 500 million ad campaign already started by the Republicans they will make sure you get the list. Besides, Hilary is expected to collect 2.5 billion in campaign cash and that is just about all you need to know.

## No Party Preference is California's Third Political Party

After reviewing our choices for president, to date, is it any wonder that "No Party Preference" (NPP) is the fastest growing political party in the state? Well it's not exactly a political party, and the registrants probably couldn't agree on the time of day, but NPP has made the largest gains in registered voters throughout the state and in Kings and Tulare County. The current in-fighting in the Tulare County Democratic Party won't hurt NPP's numbers either.

From 2005 to 2015, the number of those registered NPP in Kings County increased from about 10 percent to 16 percent. As for Tulare County the newest numbers are, 46 percent of the registered voters are Republican 31 percent are registered Democrat and 18 percent are registered NPP.

Statewide the numbers are close to opposite of what is going on here. In California 28 percent of the registered voters are Republican and 24 percent is No Party Preference. Democrats are 43 percent of the registered voters.

According to the Hanford Sentinel, "Allen Hoffenblum (Republican commentator) thinks the decline-to-state category will eventually surpass Republican registration in the Golden State. He noted that, if you add up all the people in the decline to state category plus all the third-party registrants, it surpasses the number of people calling themselves Republicans."

Even though the state's numbers do not reflect the political make up in Tulare and Kings Counties, both parties locally are losing members to those registering NPP.

The Hanford Sentinel said, "noting the national polarization between Republicans and Democrats in recent years, Ken Baird, formerly of the Kings County Registrar of Voters, said both parties 'need to take a really hard look at who they are. I think people are just pretty dissatisfied with what they're seeing.'"

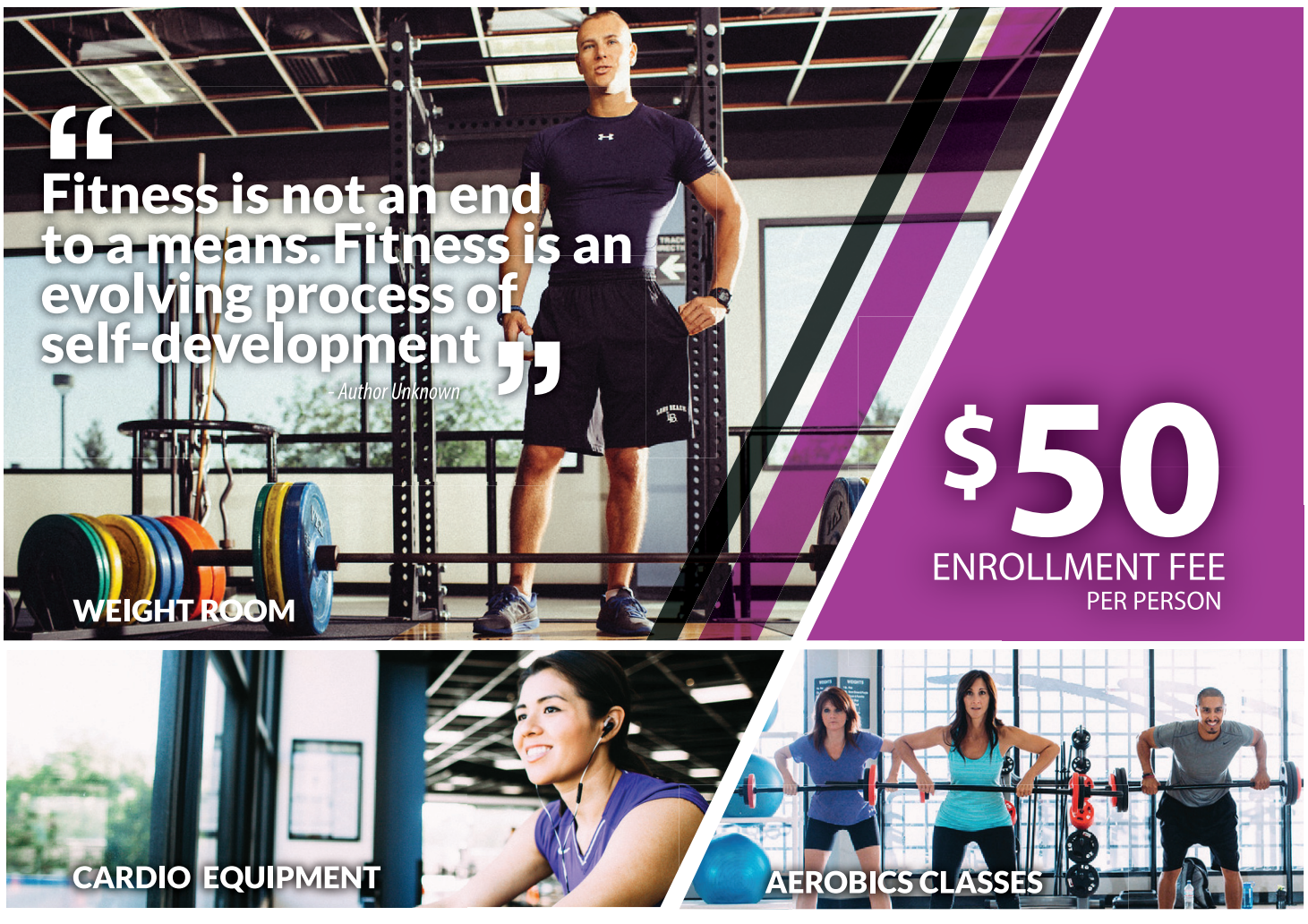
## Democrats Start Early in Trying to Unseat Valadao

Democrat Daniel Parra has announced his candidacy early for the 21st congressional district against Rep. David Valadao. His early entrance indicates the need to start fundraising and campaigning now against a formidable candidate. Mr. Parra, a longtime resident of the San Joaquin Valley, grew up in Parlier with his six siblings.

Mr. Parra has the registration edge in a Democratic district but still needs an early start because Rep. Valadao continues to crush his democratic opponents. Even though Kings County is in the 21st district, 47.4 percent of the registered voters are Democrat and only 31 percent Republicans. This is because the 21st district also includes Fresno and Kern Counties that lean Democrat.

Rep. Valadao's successful campaigns

POLITICAL FIX continued on 4 »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# Political Fix

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in a Democrat district might be explained by his appeal to NPP registrants. Rep. Valadao is very effective in getting the swing vote, and the NPP may lean to the right, but is also considered the swing vote.

NPP might also explain why Democrat John Hernandez did so poorly in a presidential election year against Rep. Valadao in 2012. Although President Obama won the general vote in the 21st district, Mr. Hernandez lost by a landslide. Democrats lost by a landslide again in 2014, when Rep. Valadao beat Amanda Renterial.

Good luck Daniel. You will need it.

### Rants and Raves

Who is sick of all of the hyperbole surrounding water?

Representative Devin Nunes made an astute observation about the drought when he said, "It's nice to see some media interest in the problem, though they're coming pretty late to the game. It's amazing how a decades-long crisis in the Valley turns into a big story once the effects hit San Francisco and other coastal enclaves."

About a month ago, Governor Brown told urban users to cut their water use by 25 percent. Then the moans and cries started when he did not mandate that farmers cut their water use. Really? What part of 0 percent allocation don't those crying foul understand? Last year, the Central Valley Project cut farmers and some communities' water allocation to 0 percent. Actually, unless there is a flood, farmers' never get their full allotment from the CVP or the State Water Project.

I have a problem with armchair environmentalists that are woefully ignorant of the state's agriculture industry. But I also have a problem when huge irrigation districts and their mouthpieces complain about how much water is wasted on the environment.

Just like a father cannot babysit his own children, you cannot give water to the environment. It is true that the agriculture industry should be frustrated that our water infrastructure has the capability to prevent water from escaping into the ocean.

But when God created the earth I don't think he had the Central Valley Plan (CVP) in mind. We all learned in first grade that it snows in the mountains and that snow melts and flows in the rivers. Those rivers then flow into the ocean. Then the water evaporates and it happens all over again.

It's called the "cycle of water."

When the environmentalist claim that agriculture uses 80 percent of the state's water, and then the agriculture industry turns around and says that the environment uses 78 percent of the water, both sides have lost their argument.

The agriculture industry is not going to convince any sane person that it is OK to dam up a major river and let it go dry. And lay people don't have the right to tell a farmer that he or she has to fallow their land and lose their livelihood.

Is it the best and most beneficial use of the water to let it flow into the ocean? Both sides have a point and both sides are right. They better just start dealing with it.

The elephant in the room is the fact that the Central Valley would be the poorest state in our nation behind Mississippi, if the "six states initiative" had gotten on the ballot last November and passed.

If the families who work for the agricultural industry could send their children to college or, just the orthodontist, like their employers do, more people would care a little less about "a stupid little fish" like the Delta Smelt.

### Now To End With the Ridiculous

If you have been missing former state assembly member and former candidate for Governor, Tim Donnelly, as much as I have there is a remedy.

He now has a three-hour a day radio talk show. Don't despair, if you miss it, you can listen to his show on his website and take a gander at his new logo of a gun-toting figure that looks suspiciously like a Confederate soldier.

Here is the promotion for his show.

"Broadcasting from deep behind enemy lines in the occupied territory of the socialist republic of California. Welcome to The Tim Donnelly Show, where it doesn't matter if you're a Republican or a Democrat, only whether or not you're an American, no one cares if you are rich or poor, as long as you pay your own way, and the color of your skin is of no consequence here, the only colors that matter to us are the red, the white and the blue--the colors of freedom."

## Chief Jason Salazar Announces Sergeant Promotion

Chief Jason Salazar announces the promotion of Brent Miller to the position of Sergeant.

Brent Miller

Brent began his employment with the Visalia Police Department in March of 1996.

During his employment with the Visalia Police Department, Brent has held assignments in the Patrol Unit, Traffic Unit and Investigations Division. Prior to his promotion, Brent was assigned as a Commercial Policing Officer overseeing the north Dinuba Boulevard corridor.

Brent holds an Associates of Arts Degree in Administration of Justice from Sacramento City College, and both a Bachelor of Science Degree and Master of Science Degree in Criminology from California State University-Fresno.

Brent's promotion will be effective Saturday, April 18, 2015.

## Vice-Mayor Gubler Hosts 'Donuts and Discussion'

Enjoy Donuts and Discussion with Vice Mayor Warren Gubler and Police Chief Jason Salazar at Maverick's Roasting Co., from 7 to 8:30 am Saturday, April 18 at 238 E. Caldwell Ave.

This informal gathering allows any citizen to address their concerns or ask questions one-on-one with Vice Mayor Gubler. Police Chief Jason Salazar will be available to answer questions related to public safety.

Vice Mayor Gubler can also be reached through 713-4400, then enter 3313, or by email at wgubler@ci.visalia.ca.us.

# Water Commission

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sustainability plans and regulate groundwater usage.

### Lifelong Water Passion

For Herrera, a wife and mother of four, joining the commission is a means of addressing the water-scarcity issues she has faced since coming to the Central Valley at age 3, and settling in Orange Cove, an area infamous for its water scarcity and pollution problems.

"I remember as a kid hearing about the water issues and the nitrate contamination," she said. "I grew up with my parents worrying about water availability and quality."

Herrera's career in agriculture, driven by her passion for water, began in 2004 with a job as an ag-aid inspector for the state Department of Food and Agriculture, which she held until 2007. She became community advocacy director for the nonprofit Community Water Center in 2008, and currently she works as community development specialist for Self-Help Enterprises, a job that puts her knowledge of a complex issue to work in the field.

"Our job is to access funds for their communities," she said of her work with Self-Help. "I focus a lot on technical issues, so they can access funding, and administering the programs."

She is also active with grassroots organizations like El Quinto Sol de America and la Association de Gente Unida por la Agua that are working specifically in ensuring all Valley towns have access to plentiful, safe drinking water through lobbying and advocacy.

"We make sure our communities have information on local and statewide issues, and have a voice," Herrera said.

It's this life-long list of experiences that she says makes her uniquely qualified for a seat on the CWC.

"That's really where I built my knowledge, working on the ground and living the issues," Herrera said. "I saw the Water Commission as an opportunity to expand my knowledge and share my voice on the statewide commission."

### Breaking the Water Cycle

There's also the issue of her family, which Herrera says is the center of her life and drives her passion for clean, safe water.

"My favorite thing is being with my family and cooking for them," she said. "I started this work because of my kids. When I had my family and noticed the pattern: It wasn't my parents telling me not to drink the water; it was me.

"I didn't want them to be told not to drink the water or go to the park," she said, recalling similar warnings from days spent in the Culter-Orosi area as youth. Water drawn there from local wells was often undrinkable because of pollutants. "A lot of my family still lives in those areas."

Despite her passion and her desire to protect her family, Herrera was still hesitant about applying for a seat on the CWC.

"I always tell my kids to be part of the decision-making process," she said. "I thought joining the CWC is a huge responsibility. Do I have what it takes to be on the commission? I had to take a step back and ask why. I talked to my kids and said I'm going to approach this without fear."

# Marathon Meeting

Continued from p. 1

forced to use the Welcome Group.

Both staff and the Welcome Group have tried to find ways to accommodate existing groups, such as those booked by Chagan, who have used the ballroom consistently over several years. The Welcome Group needs the peak convention times, and the food and beverage revenues to make their hotel and food service economically viable.

In regard to Sa's concerns, Caviglia explained that many convention centers with a major brand host hotel have a sole source catering contract. Visalia was faced with the choice of a lesser brand hotel or accepting a company who had the capital to maintain the Marriott name. Those caliber of companies do not sign contracts unless they get an exclusive catering contract.

The Marriott is considered a premier brand, and there are only two others in the Valley, in Bakersfield and Sacramento. Caviglia said that many large conventions will not consider booking in cities that do not have a prestigious brand name hotel and that the competition for attracting large conventions is fierce. The many conventions in Visalia are one reason the city has such a vibrant downtown.

Each of the council members expressed their satisfaction with keeping the Marriott name. Council member Warren Gubler said that the Welcome Group compromised on several aspects of the contract in order to get a signed agreement. The Welcome Group also wanted to express its desire to work with the community of Visalia and be an integral part of it. The council members voted 5-0 to sign the agreement with the Welcome Group.

### Change of Zoning on Mooney Blvd. South of Packwood Creek

Paloma Development requested a change of zoning designation from Agricultural to Planned Regional Retail Commercial on 28.6 acres of property located on the southwest corner of Mooney Boulevard and West Visalia Parkway. Right now the property is an empty field bordering the Westlake housing development and Target.

A large group of mainly elderly people who live in the housing development were in attendance to object to the parcel's proposed zone change. Any new retail would border their houses on two sides. Westlake consists of 138 homes, 25 of which border the property in question. Their concerns were the traffic and noise that accompanies a large retail establishment. Their preference would be that the property remain agriculture or be zoned residential.

The current owners, who have owned the land for generations, are interested in selling the property and want it zoned in accordance with Visalia's newly minted General Plan. The property has been designated as future retail since 1971. The Visalia Planning Commission voted

MARATHON MEETING continued on 13 »

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# Agriculture

## Cotton Acreage May Be Lowest Since the 1920s

**Cecilia Parsons and Padma Nagappan**

The downward spiral of California cotton plantings will continue this year, with only 170,000 estimated acres.

Roger Isom, president of the California Cotton Growers Association, told members at the association's 25th annual meeting in Visalia there were three reasons for the lowest total cotton acres planted since the 1920s.

"Water, prices and competing crops are the reasons cotton planting is down," Isom told growers.

The 170,000-acre figure for planting came from a survey of growers. Isom said there was a 100 percent response from growers and the total could be plus or minus 10,000 to 15,000 acres. The total includes 135,000 acres of pima cotton and 35,000 acres of upland cotton.

A slightly different estimate was announced last week by the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service. NASS forecast total acreage at 155,000 acres, including 110,000 acres of pima cotton and 45,000 acres of upland varieties.

This will be the third year in a row that cotton planting has dwindled. Last year, Isom warned farmers that a continued decrease in acres would affect infrastructure. Once a signature crop of the San Joaquin Valley, cotton had to compete with silage and alfalfa crops used primarily by dairies.

High-value nut crops have taken a bite out of traditional row cropland in recent years, cutting further into cotton acreage. Although cotton has been used as a rotation crop by many growers, more expensive inputs, including water, have driven growers to higher-value crops. Cotton acres in 2012 totaled 366,000 acres, during a year of high prices for cotton lint and seed.

"There is an amazing transformation going on here from field crops and dairies to trees," said Mark Watte, a Tulare farmer who has all three commodities.

This year, Watte planted only 615 acres of cotton, down from 1,100 acres last year. Three hundred of those lost cotton acres were planted to trees.

"It's all acala cotton, " he said of this year's crop. In Tulare County historically, Watte said, pima yields are about a bale less an acre, so it takes a huge price difference to make up for that lower yield.

"We looked at the acres, the crops and the amount of water we had and made our planting decisions," Watte said. "Some of that drop in acres is the drought and some is the trees. You have to look at the value of the crop, the amount of water you have."

The cotton was planted in mid- to late March and the season is off to a great start, Watte said, noting that planting was about two weeks earlier than normal.

Drought isn't the only problem facing the state's cotton sector. A sudden increase in whitefly population threatens to become unmanageable and continues to puzzle growers and pest experts.

Whiteflies feed on plant sap and then excrete "honeydew." The sweet, sticky honeydew settles on open cotton bolls. If sticky cotton makes its way to ginning mills, it gums up the machinery, which brings the gin to a halt.

Farmers are concerned, because sticky cotton leads to a sticky reputation.

When Fresno County cotton grower Paul Betancourt got a call from the gin manager saying sticky cotton was found, he said he was shocked. He and other growers in the region are working with University of California experts to try to figure out what has caused this spike in whitefly population and what to do about it.

It's not the first time this pest has hurt cotton crops. Fifteen years ago when growers noticed sticky cotton, they jumped on the problem and took care of it with insect growth regulators. And in the Imperial Valley, where cotton acreage has now shrunk to about 1,500 acres, they found that planting melons next to cotton supplied the pest with constant food, so cutting down on melon planting to just once a year instead of rotating it more often helped reduce the whitefly problem.

Growers, therefore, placed a lower priority on the pest until two years ago, when it began to rapidly build back up in population. Treatments are not helping this time around, because the whitefly just comes back a week or two later. Why it's happening is the question that has people worried.

"Many years ago, Arizona had a whitefly problem and it took them over 10 years to climb out of the issue," Isom said. "When you have sticky cotton that goes to a ginning mill, one bale can shut down a line of machines and it can hurt the entire mill."

In Arizona, the mills stopped buying local cotton until the problem was resolved. Isom said he hopes 2015 will not be a repeat of the last two years, when the whitefly plagued cotton crops. The drought has reduced cotton and melon crops further, which he said might help cut down on the pest's population.

Cotton growers are now in a wait-and-watch mode. Whiteflies build up in July-August and leave by September-October, when cotton crops have defoliated.

But by then, they've already done damage, unless the crop gets light rain, which can wash the sticky sugars out. There is no known biocontrol agent, but UC researchers are working with farmers to find methods to control the pest.

UC researcher Pete Goodell said the honeydew problem results in discounted prices for growers and requires a management program to prevent. Management, Goodell said, includes early sampling for nymphs and treatments when population thresholds are reached. He said sampling early in the growing season and looking below the canopy at the lower parts of cotton plants is important.

A panel of growers shared their observations of whitefly infestations. Betancourt said in spite of a close watch at boll opening last year, whitefly infestation caused sticky cotton in his fields. He applied agricultural chemicals, but whiteflies seemed to "shake it off," he said.

"This is not good. We're losing money on quality. That is a big deal on the global market," he said.

Doug Devaney, a pest control advisor for JG Boswell, said sticky cotton is the biggest single quality issue. JG Boswell operates its own gins and is able to tag cotton modules that are suspect, to keep them from contaminating clean cotton. They sample each bale, he said, for sticky cotton.

His observation is that neighboring crops can have an influence on whitefly pressure. If the neighbors do not spray, Devaney said, there is a problem. Restrictions on certain other control materials in neighboring crops also affect their ability to control whitefly.

UC Davis integrated pest management researcher Larry Godfrey said whiteflies appear to have become more difficult to control in the last two years. At the Shafter research station, he said whiteflies had not been a problem until two years ago. Last year, he noted, it took four pesticide applications to knock down whitefly populations.

Chlorpyrifos is one of the only materials cotton growers have used to control cotton aphid and whitefly. The Cotton Crop Team, formed by UC and cotton-sector representatives to take a critical look at use of this product in cotton, reported that the loss of alternatives has placed more importance on chlorpyrifos and driven increased use. Those alternatives include carbofuran, endosulfan, aldicarb and methamidophos. Chlorpyrifos is the only material that is effective and penetrates plant canopy for late-season cotton aphid and whitefly control, the report said.

The team also identified research needs, including evaluation of efficacy of alternative control materials, resistant cotton varieties and new approaches for pesticide application.

They also cited policy changes, including asking the California Department of Pesticide Regulation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to reconsider factors leading to Section 18 critical-use exemption beyond economics and include implications of additional alternative products on improving IPM.

Despite these issues, California still had two of the best years on record in terms of yield and quality in 2013 and 2014, Isom said, with about 670,000 bales of cotton.

(Cecilia Parsons is a reporter in Ducor. Padma Nagappan is a reporter in San Diego.)

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# Tulare County

Continued from p. 1

the general fund revenues. Rousseau was particularly interested in property tax trends during the last 40 years and their impacts on the county's general fund. Until 2009, the county had never experienced a negative assessed value growth.

From 1976-2005, assessed value growth averaged 4 percent a year. During the economic boom from 2005–2009 the assessed value of land in Tulare County increased by an incredible 45 percent, he said. It is what Rousseau described as a "classic bubble." The land values would have been assessed even higher if the assessor had a chance to get caught up and reassess all the properties, he said.

When the housing bubble burst, land values were hit with three consecutive years of negative assessed value. This left Tulare County with less money to provide the same expected services. The last three years have seen a significant recovery, but a conservative financial approach is still in order because no one has completely recovered from the recession.

"The gorilla in the room," as Rousseau put it, is the drought. Water levels in wells continue to drop and are affecting the ability of farmers to generate agriculture income. This will lead to the lowering of land values. As agriculture land values decrease, it will have an adverse effect on Tulare County's budget.

Right now, though, the county is in recovery. As a result of the slow recovery the county has been able to fill many positions left empty and add some positions. Tulare County is the number one employer in the county, with approximately 4,000 employees. The lion's share of the new positions will be in the Health and Human Services Agency, with 30 new employees.

Supervisor Steve Worthley said, he was pleased with the fact that some departments were able to add positions, so that veteran employees can go back to working a normal work week instead working double time.

Worthley said, he feels very good where the county is positioned, and that we are doing well.

Supervisor Phil Cox said, Rousseau should be commended on how well he manages the county's finances. The county has stayed fiscally conservative, is doing well and is healthy, he said.

"We made a plan and we are following the plan," he said.

A prior Budweiser Sequoia Cycling Classic

# Sequoia Cycling

Continued from p. 1

and helmets, although there will be some available onsite. All children entered will receive medals for competing.

The day is aimed at families. Beside the race, there will be a Kid's Zone on Stevenson and Main. Strider Bikes will have an Adventure Zone, providing a safe environment for children of all abilities, from 18 months to 5 years, to ride and/or learn to ride bikes.

The California Fitness Academy will hold 15-minute children's exercise classes throughout the day. A bounce house and face painting will also be available all day along with a variety of exhibitors promoting safety and health for children.

A food court will offer at least five different food vendors throughout the day. Adults may visit the Beer Garden and VIP tickets are available for the tent on the start/finish line, where lunch will be catered by Tazarria's, and local dignitaries will attend.

While racing and competition, in-and-of-itself, is fun, the main draw is the large purse the locals have been able to amass. Once the race was being rekindled, sponsors started calling, Henson said. Organizers raised close to $23,000 in cash sponsorships within three months. There is $15,000 in cash prizes within the men's and women's races, as well as various prizes including racing shirts, t-shirts and nutritional products. The Classic is of particular interest for women who often are not created equal in prizes. They will be at the Classic, and as such the event is drawing more women riders than other California races.

The community has really rallied to have the event return, as it has suffered a five-year absence from the area, Henson said. Local residents are opening their homes to provide lodging for racing teams that weekend. Individuals have volunteered in a variety of ways. However, more volunteers are needed for the day of the race.

Each corner of the track will have a volunteer equipped with a whistle and radio, to assure the track is clear and to be first responders in case of an accident. No spectators will be allowed on the track throughout the day for any reason, Henson said.

Other volunteers are needed to help with parking, and as runners from one event area to another.

Race entry is $35 prior to the race, with a $10 late fee day of the race. A one-day permit is required for the Elite V race, for those who are not current members, which covers insurance and recoding fees, and can be purchased when entering.

For more information on entry, volunteering or in general, visit www.sequoiaclassic.com or call, 909-5280.

# Book Donations Sought for April 17 "Reading Roundup" Book Drive

Read for Life and Momentum Broadcasting are asking area residents to drop off new or gently used children's books during the "Reading Roundup" book drive on Friday, April 17, at College of the Sequoias in Visalia.

The drive will take place from 7am to 5:30pm at College of the Sequoias' circle drive off Mooney Boulevard in Visalia. COS is located at 915 S. Mooney Blvd.

All books will be distributed to children through Read for Life, a family-based literacy program that encourages parents to provide the foundation for reading beginning at birth.

The nonprofit is currently working to reduce an estimated illiteracy rate of 32 percent in Tulare County.

The organization is most in need of books for children to age 5.

# "A Tribute to the Greatest Generation"

"A Tribute To The Greatest Generation", a nostalgic 1940's musical show, is coming to Visalia on Saturday, April 25, with a Matinee and an Evening Show at the Central Valley Christian High School theater.

The award-winning Visalia 'Mighty Oak Chorus' and Fresno's 'GNC A Cappella Chorus' will perform the greatest hits from the 1940's saluting our Armed Forces veterans.

All military veterans and active military will be admitted free to the Matinee Show with proceeds going to the Rimpact Foundation to help relieve stress to injured combat veterans.

Tickets for both the 2pm Matinee Show and the 7:30pm Evening Show are priced at just $16 for adults and only $8 for children age 12 & under. Advance tickets may be ordered by calling Bud Case in Visalia at 901-4615 or by sending an email to Eagle62@JPS.net.

Credit cards are welcome at the website: visaliamightyoakchorus.org using the 'PayPal' account.

The 650 seat theater is located on the Central Valley Christian High School campus in Visalia at 5600 West Tulare Avenue.

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# CEMEX and Residents Continue Negotiations Over Dry Wells

**Catherine Doe**

Tulare County Planning Commission met on April 8 to continue the public hearing and consider the settlement progress made between CEMEX and the neighbors of its Stillwell mine whose wells have gone dry.

Mike Spata, Director of the Resource Management Agency (RMA), started the hearing by informing the commissioners that the lawyers were present to report that both sides have reached a tentative agreement. He also explained, the RMA has a draft agreement of revisions to the conditional use permit that CEMEX and the affected residents are expected to sign.

When the commissioners asked what those revisions were, Spata said that negotiations were still confidential and that he would outline them at the next public hearing. He also said that there would be no surprises because all the permit issues had been discussed in the previous hearings.

Paul Mitchell, lawyer for CEMEX, said that he cannot divulge the contents of the negotiations, but confirms that they have happened, and that CEMEX signed the agreement last week.

Ray Carlson, lawyer for the affected residents, said that they were ready to also sign the agreement. CEMEX, the residents and RMA are all on the same page concerning the revised conditions on CEMEX' use permit, Carlson said.

Spata declared the commission can consider the case settled and asked that the planning commission return in 30 days, after all the documents were signed.

The problems started at Stillwell in November of 2013, after several residents' wells dried up because CEMEX stopped filling the recharge trench that maintained their water levels. The multi-national corporation initially refused to fill the recharge trench because someone stole the wiring to the pumps that transferred the water from their pond. CEMEX tried to blame the drought for the dry wells, but got called out on their false allegations by a peer report conducted by the consulting firm Tully and Young. Soon after the peer report the lawyers took over the case.

With a signed agreement between the residents, CEMEX and the RMA imminent, everything is status quo until reclamation of the mine begins or until CEMEX decides to turn off the pumps. Currently the water from the 50-foot-deep, 30-acre pond, created by CEMEX' mining activities, fills the recharge trench and lowers the pond. The pond then refills with water from the underground aquifer and the process starts again--proving the point that outside consultants, local water experts and the community have said all along: that CEMEX' mining activities drained its neighbors' wells.

Anticipating more legal trouble, CEMEX also started filling the recharge trench next to their Lemon Cove Facility. CEMEX did not speak to these affected residents, and were not ordered to so by RMA; they just, out of the blue, started up the pumps. Once CEMEX filled that recharge trench, the neighbors' wells went back to normal. The farmers and residents who live next to CEMEX' Lemon Cove Facility, about a mile northwest of Stillwell, have experienced problems with their wells for years, allegedly because of CEMEX' mine. They were not part of the public hearing or the settlement.

Even with a signed agreement, the Stillwell mine neighbors' property values have been cut in half while they have incurred about $20,000 in expenses. The ordeal for the families living next to the Stillwell mine has not just been dealing with the lack of water, but trying to coordinate their jobs and families with going to hearings and meetings, finding a lawyer and effectively documenting the details of their wells going dry--all with very limited financial resources.

Of the affected homes, one head of the household is on home dialysis, another is blind and another couple is extremely elderly with a range of health problems. One family just gave up and left, incurring huge losses to their property as it has become unsellable. Right now the home has water but that could stop any day, depending on whether CEMEX decides to keep the pumps running.

The affected residents are hopeful that the RMA shoulders this huge responsibility next time and that the Tulare County Planning Commission prevents this from happening in the future by ensuring that CEMEX never mines gravel in the county again.

Because the negotiations are still confidential, neither Spata nor the lawyers could answer any of the planning commission's questions. During this lengthy process it is unclear what role the planning commission has played in helping the affected residents, except to provide a venue for both sides to air their grievances. Once lawyers get involved the planning commission's hands seem to be tied and they are unable to impart their land use wisdom or have any say in the agreement.

CEMEX is close to making all their legal problems go away with Stillwell and the Lemon Cove Facility--just in time for them to ask for another mining permit, this time at McKay Point. Carlson was asked what happens if CEMEX gets the mining permit at McKay Point then turns off the pumps.

"Then the whole process starts all over," he said.

The next planning commission meeting concerning the settlement will be Wednesday, May 13.

# Victor Davis Hanson to Speak at VEDC Annual Meeting

**Staff Reports**

Noted author and historian Victor Davis Hanson will be the guest speaker for the Visalia Economic Development Corporation's Annual Meeting at 7am on Wednesday, April 22, at the Visalia Marriott.

Victor Davis Hanson

His presentation, "A Tale of Four Droughts," will focus on the economic impacts of California's water management policy and the drought. The event is open to the public.

Hanson is the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, focusing on classics and military history. He is the author of some 250 articles, book reviews and newspaper editorials. He is a syndicated columnist for Tribune Media Services and a weekly columnist for National Review Online and PJ Media.

He continues to run the family raisin farm in Selma.

Event sponsors include California Water, R&F Disposal, Buckman-Mitchell Insurance, Groppetti Automotive Family, Hyde Commercial Real Estate, Paloma Development and Southern California Edison.

Admission for breakfast and the presentation is $35 in advance per person for non-members of the VEDC or $40 per person at the door. To RVSP and pay by credit card, contact Julie Ebert, jebert@thelockwoodagency.net.

# Apps for Ag Gains Urgency from Gov. Brown

Governor Brown's new drought emergency order adds urgency to the Apps for Ag software development competition April 17-19 at West Hills College Coalinga (WHCC), said organizers, who also announced a widely respected and diverse judging panel.

Gov. Brown called for an immediate investment in a new Water Energy Technology (WET) Program for "innovative technologies" in agriculture. WET projects for "on-farm precision technology" must "achieve water and energy savings, and greenhouse gas reductions by accelerating use of cutting-edge technologies."

"Apps for Ag, with our unique collaboration of local farmers and software developers, will answer the governor's call for action," said Clint Cowden, WHCC Farm of the Future director and event co-organizer. The event takes place on the campus at 518 W. Gale Ave., Coalinga.

The competition judging panel now includes Harris Farms senior executive William Bourdeau, California Public Utilities Commission member Catherine J.K. Sandoval, Better Foods Ventures managing investor Rob Trice and Agrian engineering lead Peter Brandt.

There is still time for Apps for Ag registration at http://www.apps-for-ag.com. Tickets will be available at the door for $50.

Area farmers will pose challenges for developer teams, which will showcase their ingenuity for a judging panel composed of experienced developers, farmers and investors.

Lariat Larry

# Senior Day Takes on a Country Faire Theme

**Staff Reports**

The 46th annual Senior Day in the Park will sport a cowboy motif with a County Faire flair on Friday, May 1 from 9am-2pm in Mooney Grove Park. This popular event brings more than 1,200 attendees of seniors, families and caregivers, each year. It started not long after President John F. Kennedy declared the month of May as Older Americans Month, in 1963.

The morning starts off with a cake walk, a favorite according to Tammie Weyker, spokesman for the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency. The event is a collaboration of TCHHSA and the Tulare-Kings Area Agency on Aging.

Other activities include morning and early afternoon line dancing. Bingo will be played.

The annual car show, produced by Visalia Vapor Trailers, the Good Timers and Rollin' Relics will feature more than 100 cars, originally built before the '60s. There are always some Model T's and other vintage vehicles, all show-quality and polished up. There is no entry fee, and no judging. The cars are just on display.

Along with live music from Elvis, who traditionally attends the event, this year's entertainment includes Lariat Larry, a trick-roping specialist and cowboy storyteller from the Bay Area. Lariat Larry, a teacher, has been juggling, storytelling, roping and riding in California shows, parades and fairs since the early 1990's. He may bring a horse, or ride his unicycle.

Emceeing the event is local celebrity, Randy Hendrix from Momentum Broadcasting, who will be featuring county western music to accompany the Country Faire theme.

Attendees may also expect numerous exhibitors, free food and, this year, antique farm equipment on display, Weyker said. There will even be a free raffle.

Senior Day in the Park is open free to all seniors, their families and caregivers.

For more information, 1-800-434-0222.

# City of Visalia Plays Chicken with Ordinance

**Catherine Doe**

During a Visalia City Council work session on April 6, council discussed initiating a zoning amendment to allow keeping chickens within city limits. Keeping chickens in residential zones is not presently allowed in Visalia, except in the Rural Residential and Agricultural Zone districts.

This issue is addressed in a variety of ways throughout the State. Most cities, like Visalia, classify chickens and similar fowl as barnyard or farm animals, and exclude them from being kept as household pets. Other nearby cities are mixed in their allowances for chickens.

Of nine local cities examined, four allowed chickens and five did not. The four cities that do allow chickens within their city limits are Exeter, Farmersville, Lindsay and Woodlake. Farmersville does not even require a coop, while Exeter allows up to 10 fowl.

Cities that allow the keeping of chickens have generally concluded that chickens can be pets and potential food sources providing eggs and meat. The cities have allowed from one to several chickens on residential lots, either by permit, or by right.

Cities that allow chickens typically include several restrictions such as: no roosters, no killing and/or dressing the animals on the premises, and require enclosure standards, including setbacks from property lines or habitable structures. These standards and limitations are intended to minimize the potential nuisance effects of these animals on adjacent and nearby properties.

The following features may be part of a Visalia ordinance:

- Limit the allowance to the R-1 and R-1-4.5 zone districts - This would preclude keeping chickens in medium and high density multi-family residential zones where space is limited and potential for conflicts is greater.
- Limit the maximum number to four chickens and no roosters per parcel. This would allow a reasonable number of chickens for egg production and for eventual dressing and consumption of the chickens. However, this number would also minimize the potential for nuisance impacts on other residences (noise, odors, vermin and predator attraction).
- Require coops/enclosures that provide shelter for each chicken at a rate of a minimum of three square feet per animal, as recommended by industry literature for chicken coops. Council may also consider allowing free range keeping during daylight hours or without any time restrictions so long as chickens do not leave the property.
- Coops/enclosures are required - set a minimum separation of at least 10 feet from habitable structures. This separation distance can be met by most residential lot configurations in the City's residential zones.
- Limit the killing and dressing of chickens to indoor locations only. This would limit the potential for offending adjacent residents in the course of keeping chickens for eventual consumption.
- Consider requiring an over the counter permit for all chicken keeping. The permit process could ensure education about City standards and compliance with the above provisions. However, enforcement would admittedly be difficult. It is anticipated that the permit fee would be a one-time fee in the range of the annual license fee for cats ($8) and dogs ($18).

The staff recommended that city council directs them to present an ordinance amendment at a future regular meeting to allow chickens in residential zones. The vote was 3-2 in favor of bringing the item back to the council with Nelsen and Link voting against.

Nelsen commented that there are more cities that don't allow chickens than do. He already has to clean up after the neighbor's cats in his yard and he doesn't feel like doing the same for someone's chickens, he said. He assumes that the chickens will be kept in coops but that would not prevent an increase in the amount of bugs attracted to the chicken feed and the odor, he said.

# Storybook Dreams Becoming Reality

**Nancy Vigran**

A passion for gardening and for teaching sparked an idea for Judy Wait that developed into a learning center and visitor's destination for the whole community.

Retired from full-time teaching, Wait continued to teach through school gardening in Hanford elementary schools. She considered the possibility of opening a community garden across from Martin Luther King High School, but, a fellow member of the Hanford Garden Club expounded on the idea of starting a community children's garden.

The summer of 2011, Wait and her husband, Larry, planned a vacation revolving around visiting children's gardens around the country. With a lot of research, the top of her list was the Bookworm Gardens in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. She was not disappointed and there she learned what other stops could be added, or crossed off her list.

"She was spot on," Wait said of the Bookworm Gardens representative.

Also, that representative suggested Wait join the American Horticultural Society which hosts a National Children and Youth Garden symposium every year. Wait has not been disappointed, from the gardens they visited to the advice given.

The spark grew into a huge flame of volunteers and cooperation leading to a non-profit organization, the purchase of property, donation of a museum building and plans for one acre of gardening, education and fun.

The future home of the Children's Storybook Museum and Gardens is located at the corner of Harris and Tenth in downtown Hanford. The property is located adjacent to the county library, where it can share a parking lot and is a short distance to the town's square.

And, while the Hanford Garden Club members have played an important role in its conception, and future, Storybook is a separate entity, Wait said.

The property was purchased from Bill Clark, who donated the Burr House, built in 1909, along with a tank house and tool shed. Other donations kept on coming including a grant from the City of Hanford for curbs, gutters and sidewalks. Designing expertise has come through John Zumwalt of Zumwalt, Hansen and Associates, along with plans and blueprints, which has all been donated. Other donations include the use of temporary fencing surrounding the property, and irrigation systems to be installed throughout the gardens. Heating and air conditioning systems for the museum, kitchen and restrooms have also been donated.

To date, there is not a lot to look at, with the Burr House being placed on its new foundation, and the tank house place and freshly painted by volunteers. But, the plans for this one-acre parcel are huge. The Burr House will sport an addition and will be the focal point as a local museum. A carriage house is to be built along with many small houses and gardens taken straight out of fairy tales and other books.

Included are such themed gardens, homes and spots such as Monet's Cottage and Van Gogh's Garden. Peter Rabbit and his family will have a garden with a useable tunnel to Mr. McGregor's Garden, and the Three Little Pigs will also have their own garden with bricks, sticks and straw. And, of course, there will be a Secret Garden.

The Hanford Garden Club is sponsoring and designing a Blue-Star Memorial dedicated to local veterans. Sponsors for many of the other gardens are still being sought, while some already have had the naming rights purchased, Wait said.

Plans have been developed for a barn-like structure as the indoor-outdoor classroom, which will include a kitchen. And, a three-story treehouse and a stone cottage will be built. A shallow creek with recycled water will run through the property with boating and wading opportunities.

Well named as a children's museum and gardens, the location is aimed at children of all ages.

"One of the things that is really, really important to our group, is that we are accessible to everyone," Wait said.

A Green Teen program is in the works, for teenagers to learn to read to younger children.

The gardens will also be available for various rentals including small meeting groups, book clubs and weddings. There will be cooking classes and wine tastings. It will be open to the public and as a destination for school groups, and while Kings County schools will have priority when first openings, groups from anywhere can arrange to attend, Wait said.

There will also be a café and bistro open to the public.

The museum and gardens will be environmentally friendly with some solar-power and low-flow water usage measures. Drought-tolerant plants will be utilized as much as possible, Wait said.

"This is an investment in the community," she said. "And the community is all for it."

Hanford Mayor Russ Curry concurred.

"My personal opinion is that I support it, 100 percent," Curry said. "It promotes proper health for children, first of all, and it gives children something to do in the garden."

Curry said it is a perfect location, within walking distance to the town square and other local attractions.

"Tons and tons of children come on field trips to downtown Hanford," he said, "and what a wonderful place for them to get to visit."

While expectations were originally set for Children's Storybook to open this year, it will not happen until 2016.

"We are thinking that next year, we will open with what we have, and will continue to open in phases," Wait said.

For more information and to volunteer or donate, view, www.childrensstorybookgarden.org/ or call, 559-341-4845.

## UPCOMING EVENT

The Children's Storybook Museum and Garden celebrates the Kentucky Derby with its second annual Derby Day fundraiser, benefiting the cause.

On Saturday, May 2 from 11 am-4 pm at a private residence in Hanford, ladies can show-off their big hats, and dress up with their man in the ambiance of the Kentucky Derby. Attendees may have brunch on Millionaires Row or enjoy the BBQ on the infield.

There will be mint juleps and bourbon tasting; a cigar and beer garden. The race will be streamed in live on big screens around the event.

While dressing up can be fun, it is not required. Attendees should wear whatever is comfortable for them.

Tickets for the event are $100 per person in advance or $125 at the door. All proceeds go toward building the museum and garden.

For more information, visit www.childrensstorybookgarden.org/derby-day. This is a 21 year and older event.

# Agriculture Exempt from Mandatory Water Reductions?

Governor Brown made California history this week when he issued an executive order calling for cities and towns across the state to implement "substantial" mandatory water reductions in an effort to curb wasteful water use and make California "more drought resilient."

It is no shock, least to whom the agricultural sector, that California is experiencing a water crisis. The impetus of this crisis, natural or political, is up for debate. But regardless of the cause, agriculture has suffered the most losses as a result.

Approximately 46 percent of California's fresh citrus is produced in the Friant Service Area and will receive zero percent surface water allocation for a second year in a row.

The Governor recognized this fact in a press release Wednesday stating that agriculture users "have borne much of the brunt of the drought to date, with hundreds of thousands of fallowed acres, significantly reduced water allocation and thousands of farmworkers laid off."

Nevertheless, it's too often reported that the agriculture industry is guzzling up 80 percent the State's diminishing water supply. This is not true.

According to the State Water Resources Control Board the average annual water supply in the State of California from rain and snowpack is 200 million acre-feet; 58.8 percent of that total remains undeveloped. The remaining 41.2 percent (82.5 million acre-feet) is developed water. Of that, 41 percent is used by agriculture to grow food and fiber for people; 10.8 percent goes to urban and industrial use, while 47.8 percent is used for environmental purposes.

By the Governor's order, cities and towns across the state must reduce water use by 25 percent. This represents a savings of approximately 1.5 million acre-feet, the amount currently in Lake Oroville, within nine months. Based on current water use, this equals a 2.7 percent savings in California's total annual water supply. While this by no means comes close to the "mandatory reductions" that Friant water users are grappling with (100 percent), it is something.

But what if there was a mandatory reduction on the use of developed water for environmental purposes (remember, undeveloped water is also used by the environment)? How much water could California save then?

A 25 percent reduction in environmental water use could equal a savings of approximately 9.85 million acre-feet in one year (or 7.39 million acre-feet in 9 months). Less than 4 percent would need to be cut to save 1.5 million acre-feet.

It has been suggested that that agriculture is "exempt" from mandatory restrictions when in reality the only user of water that has not been asked, or forced, to take a cut is the environment. Is that balance?

# Who Really Uses 80% of the Water?

For a second consecutive year farmers in the Central Valley will receive a zero percent allocation of surface water from the Central Valley Project. Citrus growers in the Friant Service Area are among the most severely impacted. As growers grapple with another year of no water, more and more acreage continues to be taken out of production.

"There is no denying that California is the midst of a water crisis," says California Citrus Mutual President Joel Nelsen. "For a fourth consecutive year Mother Nature has failed to provide the rain and snow desperately needed to replenish our nearly depleted reservoirs.

"This is not the first time California has experienced a drought and it certainly will not be the last. But until recent history, we have had the infrastructure and water policy necessary to navigate successfully through the inevitable dry years. Today, we do not have a system in place that is capable of meeting the State's growing demand.

"No sector has been asked, or forced, to take a cut as large as agriculture has. Citrus growers are receiving zero surface water this year. Trees, some decades-old, are being bulldozed. How much more of a cut can we take?"

It is a widely sensationalized myth that agriculture uses 80% of California's water. According to information from the California Department of Water Resources, it is the environment that actually consumes a majority of the State's water resources, approximately 78.5%.

The chart below shows how California's water resources are divided between the environmental, agricultural and urban sectors. Both agriculture and the urban sector have been required and forced to reduce their water use. The only sector that has been "exempt" from water reductions is, in fact, the largest user of water - the environment.

THE PRECEDING ARTICLES WERE COURTESY CALIFORNIA CITRUS MUTUAL

# County Sponsored Loop Bus Offers Rides to At-Risk Youth to Sequoia Shuttle Stops

The Tulare County-sponsored Local Organizations Outreach Program, more commonly referred to as the LOOP Bus program, is offering no-cost transportation for at-risk youth to the City of Visalia's Sequoia Shuttle bus stops. Local after-school programs, community and faith-based organizations, as well as local government entities and school districts are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity for disadvantaged youth to explore the outdoors at no cost.

The LOOP Bus program provides at-risk youth with free transportation to activities that connect them with mentoring and gang prevention programs throughout Tulare County. The program is funded by Measure R and the Tulare County Board of Supervisors. The Sequoia Shuttle, operated by the City of Visalia all summer long, offers roundtrip transportation to Sequoia National Park. Shuttles depart from various locations throughout Visalia, Exeter and Three Rivers several times a day, seven days a week starting May 21. Fixed Route Shuttle service is available inside the national park. The Sequoia Shuttle operational season will run through September 27.

With the assistance of the Kids to Trees Grant and inspired by the Healthy Parks Healthy People initiative, the Sequoia Shuttle is offering complimentary transportation, for groups of six or more, to and from the national park for underserved youth throughout the region. This offer also includes a short orientation upon arrival to the national park by an interpretative park ranger who will greet each group at the Giant Forest Museum prior to the group's self-guided venture into the park.

A scheduled LOOP Bus - Sequoia Shuttle trip would follow a similar format to the example below:

1. LOOP Bus transports participants from their home base located within Tulare County to a Sequoia Shuttle bus stop.
2. Sequoia Shuttle transports participants from the shuttle stop to Sequoia National Park. After visiting the park, the shuttle transports participants from The Park back to the shuttle stop.
3. LOOP Bus transports students from shuttle stop back to home base. Trip is complete.

Reservations for departure and return trip pick up times are required for both the LOOP Bus and the Sequoia Shuttle. The LOOP Bus requires reservations be made two weeks in advance of a desired service date; reservations can be made up to three months in advance. Sequoia Shuttle reservations are available throughout the season depending on availability and require at least six youth riders per reservation. Sequoia Shuttle reservations for large groups should be made well in advance to ensure space is available.

For more information on the LOOP Bus and Sequoia Shuttle partnership, please contact LOOP Bus staff at (559) 636-5000.

To apply for the LOOP Bus, please visit: www.stepuptc.com.

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594-1063 FD2048

# Devon Mathis Works on Getting it Done in Sacramento

**Catherine Doe**

At the Tulare County Supervisors' meeting on April 7, the supervisors voted on sending a letter of support to Mathis' assembly bill 954. The bill establishes a pilot program that will provide low interest loans or grants to private residences whose wells have gone dry. Up until now, all the funding has been earmarked for communities. Private residents have not been eligible to apply for any drought relief funds.

According to the most recent estimate by the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency, the county has experienced 996 private well failures, four fewer than the 1,000 previously reported. The county has not been adequately able to address the well failures due to a lack of funding. Mathis' bill could help bring in the needed funds to help the owners of domestic wells.

Mathis' bill states the following:

*"Many areas of the state are disproportionately impacted by drought because they are heavily dependent or completely reliant on groundwater from basins that are in overdraft and in which the water table declines year after year or from basins that are contaminated.*

*There are a number of state grant and loan programs that provide financial assistance to communities to address drinking water and wastewater needs. Unfortunately, there is no program in place to provide similar assistance to individual homeowners who are reliant on their own groundwater wells and who may not be able to afford conventional private loans to undertake vital water supply, water quality and wastewater improvements.*

*The program created by this act is intended to bridge that gap by providing low-interest loans, grants, or both, to individual homeowners to undertake actions necessary to provide safer, cleaner and more reliable drinking water and wastewater treatment. These actions may include, but are not limited to, digging deeper wells, improving existing wells and related equipment, addressing drinking water contaminants in the homeowner's water, or connecting to a local water or wastewater system."*

### Mathis Against Taxpayers Paying For Sex-change Operation

Mathis has also been very vocal about his objections to a prisoner getting gender reassignment surgery paid for by the California taxpayer. Jeffrey Bryan Norsworthy was convicted of murder and has been in prison since 1987. He started identifying as a women in the 1990s.

U.S. District Court Judge Jon Tigar in San Francisco ruled that Michelle-Lael Norsworthy's constitutional rights were being violated if the inmate's "serious medical need" was not met. The operation will be the first in state prison history and cost approximately $100,000.

Mathis' response in a press release was, Los Angeles Times

"This ruling is proof that our prison system is no longer a deterrent to criminal behavior, instead it has become a retreat at taxpayers' expenses. For a judge to even entertain the request from a convicted murderer to receive this elective medical procedure, shows a complete dishonor to our justice system, the victim's family and the taxpayers of California."

"This judge is setting precedence for criminals to receive elective procedures which are estimated to cost Californians nearly $100,000. The potential increase to our prison budget would be unsustainable especially when our current annual per inmate spending is $60,000," he said.

Mathis concluded, "we have men and women who honorably served our country, returned home to be productive members of our society, and are denied such basic medical services as eye surgeries or proper hearing aids because they are deemed "elective."

Veterans are dying on wait lists because some bureaucrat with a calculator and no medical training says it is too expensive, and yet this judge grants a criminal who will spend the rest of his life behind prison walls a sex-change operation... I know Justice is to be blind, I didn't think it was to be insane as well!"

Mathis urged the California Correctional Health Care Services to help find a way to correct this injustice to California taxpayers, the victims and their families.

### Mathis Responds To Governors Drought Proclamation

Mathis also responded to Governor Brown's first statewide mandatory water reductions. On April 1, with California facing another year of historic drought conditions, Governor Brown held a press conference to enact California's first ever-mandatory statewide water reductions order. Mathis praised the Governor's call for working together, as Californians.

"I applaud the Governor for calling on pulling together as Californians in order to survive and solve this crisis. I have been calling for action, in a bi-partisan way since being elected. I'm glad the Governor agrees with me" stated Mathis. "Pointing fingers and partisan bickering will not solve this problem, action will and I stand ready to work with the Governor and the leaders in the Legislature to find a short term and a long term solution to what can truly be called a disaster.

"My district, Assembly District 26, remains the hardest hit by this water emergency. Many of our residents are still without water in their homes and a majority earns their living through agriculture. Residents know to cherish every drop of water and our city leaders have taken stronger real steps to conserve more up front, a PR campaign to 'save water' will not bring more water out of our taps," said Mathis. "Conservation is only a Band-Aid and is a very short-term answer to a major problem our past leaders should have corrected decades ago."

The Governor's executive order calls for the streamlining of government response and prioritizing the government's review and approval of water infrastructure projects.

"The vision," Mathis said, "has to go beyond this year and look to how we will solve this crisis and the one after that. We need a long-term plan for the people of California consisting of new dams and numerous desalinization plants across our state, to not only provide for our current population, environmental and agriculture needs, but also for future growth. Californians have repeatedly approved bond money for these improvements; these plans must become reality now."

### Mathis Sponsors Other Bills

In Mathis' first few months in office he has introduced 22 bills, four of which concern veteran issues. One of those bills was co-authored with Thousand Oaks Democrat Jacqui Erwin, who serves as the Veterans Affairs Committee Chair. The bill proposes to increase budgets for community veteran service organizations. Mathis is the Veterans Affairs Committee Vice-Chair.

Another one of the bills Mathis is A.B. 144, which evolved from a conversation he had with Tulare County Sheriff Mike Boudreaux. According to *the Fresno Bee*, "It's a proposal to make illegal dumping on private property punishable as a misdemeanor. It is currently an infraction. For those illegally dumping tires on private property, the misdemeanor fines would be doubled.

The bill passed the Assembly Public Safety Committee 7-0 on April 14.

"It's a problem," said Mathis, "because tax dollars are being used to deal with the illegal dumping. And so, a bill was born.

# How Much Water Do We Each Consume in Our Food?

**Paul H. Betancourt**

The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) reports that it takes nearly 800 gallons to produce food for one person. This is a global number.

This applies to the developing world as well as the developed world. It does not matter if your food is produced through irrigation or dry land farming. 800 gallons per day, per person. Let's run that number out-

**800 gallons per person per day x 365 days= 292,000 gallons per person per year.**

It takes almost 9/10ths of an acre foot of water per year to produce your food.

Let's apply that number to California since that is our immediate concern-

**292,000 gallons per person per year x 38 million Californians= 11,096,0000,000,000**

You are reading that right, over 11 Trillion gallons of water to just produce the food to feed California. [I always encourage people to check my math. The link for the FAO report is below.]

That turns out to be just over 34 Million acre feet.

34 million acre feet turns out to be about to be the amount of water California's farmers use to produce our food. Interesting.

There are some people throwing a fit about how much water it takes to grow an almond because we export almonds.

Their accusation is we are exporting natural resources to make some people rich.

Actually, exporting almonds increases prosperity for all Californians.

That is how trade works. [In the interest of full disclosure I have proudly grown almonds for years.]

But, for a moment let's just take a look at the concern about farm water use. No matter how you slice it takes over 34 million acre feet of water to grow food to feed California.

This number does not include the cotton and wool we wear in our clothes. Even if we imported all of our food it would still take 34 million acre feet of water to grow our food.

And, what would that do to our carbon foot print?

Speaking of carbon foot printwhat is the big concern in environmental circles these days? Climate change.

What is the one thing they want us to do to lower our carbon footprint with regards to our food? Buy food grown closer to home. California's farmers can grow food for 38 million Californians, but we need a stable water supply to do it.

Whether Vegan or Junk food junkie each of us averages 800 gallons of water a day to produce our food.

292,000 gallons of water per person per year.

So what do we do?

We need to be increasing our water supply. We are not going to conserve our way out of this. There are just not enough low flow toilets.

We need more water storage, especially if you are concerned about climate change.

One of the problems with the water bond we passed last year is only 30% of the funds go to increase our water supply-if that ever gets built.

The cold, hard number is it takes 34 million acre feet just to produce the food we eat in California and we need to add 292,000 gallons of supply for each new person that comes to California, just to feed them.

http://www.fao.org/nr/water/docs/WRM_FP5_waterfood.pdf

# Briefly...

## CSET CONDUCTING COMMUNITY FORUMS

Community Services Employment Training (CSET) is conducting a series of community forums throughout Tulare County. The forums will give residents an opportunity to provide feedback on the greatest issues and needs in their community. The forums are being held to gather information for CSET's Community Action Plan. Residents can also complete an online survey at www.cset.org/cap to identify areas of need in the community.

Every two years, CSET conducts a Community Action Plan to assess current community needs and propose strategies to increase self-sufficiency for low-income Tulare County residents. CSET is asking for assistance in identifying gaps in services and seeking to identify strategies to support the economic advancement and security for everyone who lives here.

"The Community Action Plan community forums are an important part of gathering input from our residents," stated Mary Alice Escarsega-Fechner, CSET's Executive Director. "The community forums allow Tulare County residents the opportunity to identify what additional services they would like to see in their communities."

All of the forums will be from 4pm – 6pm. The dates and locations of the forums are: April 14 in Visalia at 312 N.W. 3rd Avenue; April 15 in Cutler at 12691 Ave. 408 and on April 16 in Porterville at 280 N. Fourth St. For questions or more information, contact Lily Rivera-Graves at (559) 732-4194 or Lily.Rivera@cset.org.

## APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED FOR CITY COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS

The City of Visalia is accepting applications from interested citizens for the following Committees and Commissions:

**Citizens Advisory Committee** – acts as a liaison between the general public and the City Council concerning community issues. The committee currently has a vacancy for three alternate members.

**Disability Advocacy Committee** – advises the City on the needs of disabled people. The committee promotes physical, social, communication and attitudinal access for every citizen of Visalia. The committee currently has a vacancy for one regular member and two alternate members.

**Environmental Committee** – heightens environmental awareness and conservation in Visalia. Issues addressed include air quality, hazardous waste, recycling, water conservation and all other natural resources. The Committee currently has vacancies for two regular members and two alternate members.

**Historic Preservation Committee** – administers and carries out the standards and specifications of the Historic Preservation Ordinance and promotes historic preservation including encouraging building owners to initiate preservation efforts. The Committee currently has a vacancy for two alternate members.

**North Visalia Neighborhood Advisory Committee** – serves as a liaison between the City and the North Visalia community. It is a forum for citizen complaints, problems and provides recommendations to the City Council. The Committee has vacancies for two regular members and four alternate members.

**Parks and Recreation Commission** – advises the City Council and staff in matters pertaining to parks, playgrounds and recreation centers. The Commission has a vacancy for one alternate member.

**Transit Advisory Committee** – researches and analyzes the community's continuing transit needs, reviews operations, markets the transit program and makes recommendations about the business affairs of the transit system. The Committee has vacancies for three regular members and two alternate members.

**Waterways and Trails Committee** – advises on matters related to the Bikeway Master Plan and the Waterway and Trail Master Plan. The Committee has vacancies for two regular members and four alternate members.

Applications are accepted on a continuous basis and kept for a period of two years. If you have questions you may visit our website www.visalia.city "Committees/Commissions" to view the informational handbook and application or you may contact the City Clerk's Office (559) 713-4512.

## FARM BUREAU SEEKS APPLICANTS FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Calling all high school sophomores, Tulare County Farm Bureau's Youth Leadership program applications are now available. Visit the Tulare County Farm Bureau (TCFB) website at www.tulcofb.org to apply online or contact the Farm Bureau office at 559-732-8301 for an application.

Since 1983, the Tulare County Farm Bureau has provided a unique opportunity for high school students in Tulare County to develop their leadership skills. Since its inception, the Youth leadership program has trained over 500 local students and Farm Bureau is now seeking applicants for the 31st Youth Leadership class.

The goal of this exclusive program is to select high school students from around the county who have a strong potential for developing leadership skills. Students are not required to have a connection to agriculture or to Farm Bureau, but should demonstrate an interest in developing leadership qualities.

Participants commit to an eight-month program centered around leadership development, agriculture awareness and government processes. Students take part in monthly educational seminars that focus on issues affecting agriculture, various careers in agriculture, community service, as well as county, state and federal governments.

The Youth Leadership program also gives students the opportunity to visit university campuses, tour local farms and concludes with a trip to Sacramento to visit our state's capitol and meet with our elected representatives.

There is no cost to students who participate, all expenses including travel; lodging and meals are paid by Tulare County Farm Bureau's Education and Scholarship Fund and generous contributions by Suncrest Bank.

High school sophomores are encouraged to apply for the program by May 1st. You may contact the TCFB office with any questions at 559-732-8301 or visit www.tulcofb.org for more information.

## $1,000 SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Nuestro Tiempo Magazine in partnership with So Cal Gas Company is currently requesting submissions from high school graduating seniors in Tulare and Kings Counties who anticipate being accepted and enrolling into a recognized accredited four-year college or university (enrollment verification required for payment).

To apply, simply submit a cover page, resume, and a 500-word essay. Enclose with your application a recent photo of yourself, such as your school photo, preferably a color head-shot measuring at least 3"x 5." This photo may be used in newspaper articles if you are a recipient.

Essay Topics: Describe need for financial assistance for college (20%). Describe how you will best apply your college education to benefit a community or communities of Tulare and/or King Counties (80%).

The scholarships will be awarded in the amounts $1,000 and The Three students who best demonstrates their desire to return to the Central Valley and enter a career path with intentions in making a difference in a community will be awarded.

The scholarship awardees will be notified in May and featured in the June issue of Nuestro Tiempo Magazine. The scholarship award will be presented at the Nuestro Tiempo Luncheon on June 4th, 2015 at the Visalia Holiday Inn. Deadline for consideration is Friday, May 16th, 2015.

Entries should be mailed to Post Office Box 3610, Visalia, California 93278 or may be submitted electronically via email to scholarship@nuestrotiempo.net.

## APPS FOR AG GAINS URGENCY FROM GOV. BROWN

Governor Brown's new drought emergency order adds urgency to the Apps for Ag software development competition April 17-19 at West Hills College Coalinga (WHCC), said organizers, who also announced a widely respected and diverse judging panel.

Gov. Brown called for an immediate investment in a new Water Energy Technology (WET) Program for "innovative technologies" in agriculture. WET projects for "on-farm precision technology" must "achieve water and energy savings, and greenhouse gas reductions by accelerating use of cutting-edge technologies."

"Apps for Ag, with our unique collaboration of local farmers and software developers, will answer the governor's call for action," said Clint Cowden, WHCC Farm of the Future director and event co-organizer. The event takes place on the campus at 518 W. Gale Ave., Coalinga.

The competition judging panel now includes Harris Farms senior executive William Bourdeau, California Public Utilities Commission member Catherine J.K. Sandoval, Better Foods Ventures managing investor Rob Trice and Agrian engineering lead Peter Brandt.

There is still time for Apps for Ag registration at http://www.apps-for-ag.com. Tickets will be available at the door for $50.

Area farmers will pose challenges for developer teams, which will showcase their ingenuity for a judging panel composed of experienced developers, farmers and investors.

A full copy of the Governor's call to action can be found at gov.ca.gov/docs/4.1.15_Executive_Order.pdf.

Sponsors include California Community Colleges, USDA, Agrian, gThrive, California Coast Crop Consulting, California Ag Solutions, and TerraVerde Renewable Partners.

## TCDP TO HOST INSTALLATION DINNER APRIL 18

The Tulare County Democratic Party will host the installation of officers for two of its newest clubs, the Stonewall Democrats of Tulare County and the Porterville College Young Democrats. The dinner will be held at the home of Roberto and Teresa de la Rosa in Porterville at 6pm on Saturday, April 18.

The Stonewall group is a LGBTQ Democratic organization, the only other chapter of its kind in the region is located in Fresno. The PC group is the first ever established at the college.

Installation of officers, awards and silent auction will highlight the evening. Dinner tickets are $25. For more information email ruben.macareno@yahoo.com or call 372-2126 or 308-9464.

## PC AND AMERICA'S JOB CENTER TO HOLD JOB FAIR; VENDORS WANTED

Porterville College in conjunction with America's Job Center of California is looking for businesses who are hiring for the Third Annual Job Fair on from 9am to noon, Thursday, May 7 in the Porterville College Gymnasium, 100 East College Avenue in Porterville.

Single booths are available at no charge. Setup is at 8am. Priority service will be observed from 9-9:30am for military veterans and their families. If you are a business owner who is hiring or a human resources representative and are interested in being part of this event please call (559) 788-1382 or email rroman@edd.ca.gov.

The free event is open to the public. For more information call (559) 788-1382 or visit www.portervillecollege.edu.

## SPRING WATERING SCHEDULE CONTINUES IN APRIL

Stage 4 water regulations for all City residents are in effect and the Spring schedule continues in April.

During this month, there is one watering day: Saturday for odd addresses and Sunday for even addresses. The watering times remain the same throughout the year: water before 10am or after 8pm on your designated water day.

There is an exception to the schedule for hand-watering shrubs, trees, or vegetables. These can be watered any time with a watering can or with a hose with a positive shut-off nozzle. The hose cannot be left unattended and watering of lawns outside of the watering schedule is prohibited. Washing down sidewalks, driveways, etc., is also not allowed.

For more tips on how to conserve water, go to www.gogreenvisalia.com

# Marathon Meeting

Continued from p. 5

5-0 several weeks ago to rezone the property and recommended the council follow suit. There are currently no plans to develop the property and development may not happen for 20 or more years, according to the land owners. The council members felt confident that when the time came to develop the property that all the residents' concerns would be addressed and the problems with living next door to retail mitigated. They voted 5-0 to rezone the property.

### City Council Discusses Voting District Maps

Doug Johnson from the National Demographic Corporation (NDC) started the public hearing on separating Visalia into five voting districts. Johnson's company was hired by Visalia as a result of a potential lawsuit if the city did not change from at-large elections to by-district elections. During public workshops in 2014, Johnson gave out kits on how to draw district maps and encouraged the public to do so. As a result, eight people submitted 11 district maps, in addition to three maps submitted by the NDC.

There were only three legal requirements that the public had to follow when creating their maps. Each district had to have approximately the same population, the map had to comply with the Federal Voting Rights Act, and race could not be the 'predominate factor.'

The last two conditions are contradictory because, according to the Voting Rights Act, it is also illegal to dilute a minority population in order to prevent that group from being represented on the council. For Visalia that meant that a delicate compromise needed to be weaved between not separating the Hispanic population into different districts while not using race as the predominant factor. During Johnson's presentation he revealed that, according to the 2010 census, Visalia's population consists of 34 percent Hispanics and 57 percent Whites of voting age.

Optional criteria for drawing the maps included developing boundary lines around communities of interest such as the Oval or Mooney Blvd., using visible features such as highways or rivers, keeping the districts compact and contiguous, taking into consideration where the city will grow and avoid pairing incumbents if possible.

The final criteria of incumbent pairing caused the most contention last year and during the public hearing. This issue illustrated two problems with the process of choosing voting districts: First, should candidates be voting on their own district? When this process first started, four of the five council members were dead set against districts. Second, should avoiding incumbent pairing be a criteria?

None of the maps submitted by the public took this criterion into account. Each of the 11 maps had two or three current council members in one district. The three maps submitted by NDC did not have incumbents running against each other.

Johnson's rationale for this was, according to concerned Visalian Rene Lapin, that, "The voters elected the current council members, and it should be the decision of the voters which council members are reelected to future terms. Where possible while respecting the other criteria, the administrative process of districting/redistricting should not tell voters you elected these two people in the past, but now you can only have one of them."

Lapin's response was that the population sector that voted for the city council in 2016, and subsequent years, will no longer effectively exist in the same configuration as it did in 2013 or 2011. Nor do the council members know whether the same voters of the past will vote for them in the future, or vote at all.

Lapin also pointed out that, "no one has even announced whether they plan to run again. So why should your residence locations receive any more favorable consideration on a map than those of new candidates we haven't yet heard from, who might decide to run next term?"

"I say when next November comes it's unrealistic for you to expect to keep your seats. It's happened all over the state that 'paired districts' have been adopted, and certain officials have not been able to continue serving while living in their same locations," said Lapin.

Different members of the public said, privately, that the NDC's three maps are "nothing more than Gerrymandering, plain and simple."

The third concern was the question of race and districts. Minorities throughout the state do not necessarily win in their district. This just happened during the November election in Tulare, when a Caucasian beat out two Hispanics in a predominately Hispanic district.

"Likewise there are jurisdictions where the protected minority has not won in his or her new district," Lapin said. "That's a disappointment, of course, and we in Visalia likewise have no way of knowing whether the three candidates with Hispanic surnames who've lost local elections in recent years would have won had the new districts been in place. So there are no guarantees."

Two members of the public who had submitted district maps stepped forward to give background on their submission.

Bill Balsley, who has lived in Visalia since 1974, submitted the most popular map among those involved. His map emphasized compactness and taking into account where Visalia was going to grow. He was of the opinion that Hispanics should not be packed into just one district, but may be two or more.

Vincent Salinas, a former member of the city Planning Commission, presented the second most popular map. He felt that "communities of interest" was the most important criteria and drew his map based on distinct neighborhoods.

When it was time for council members to comment on the proceedings, council member Greg Collins started it off by saying, "interesting." He said that there were so many moving parts and subtleties to drawing these maps, but that he was comfortable with five of the maps. He preferred the ones that were compact and not gerrymandered. He said, he would be curious how his choices stood up to the Voting Rights Act.

The other council members were not as confident as Collins and needed more time. Gubler said he would have a hard time whittling the choices down to five and weighing all the pros and cons. Johnson said that because of the Voting Rights Act, three of the maps would probably have to be eliminated right away. Mayor Steve Nelsen wanted to hear all of the public comment before making up his mind and will be ready after the second public hearing to choose five maps.

The council elected for this meeting to only hear Johnson's presentation and public comment, and forego any discussion of the presented maps. They reserved such discussion for a future work session and public hearing. Two more public hearings will be held, commencing with the April 20 and May 4 during the regular session of the City Council meetings, which begin at 7pm at City Hall. An informational presentation will be held during the work session at 4pm Monday, April 20 in City Hall, to allow the City Council and the public additional time to review and discuss the maps.

### City Council Rejects Proposed Ordinance to Appeal Planning Commission Decisions

An ordinance was proposed in January of this year, to allow city council members to file an appeal of a planning commission decision of a subdivision tentative map. No filing fee would be required for a council member to appeal. In December 2006, the city council adopted essentially the same ordinance under consideration now. The ordinance was unpopular with the planning commission and the business community, and was repealed in June 2010.

Currently, city council members have the same standing as any other person in the community who might want to appeal a planning commission action. The city council member would also be precluded from participating as a council member when voting on the appeal. Further, the council member would be required to pay a filing fee of $474. Greg Collins proposed in January that the city council revisit this ordinance and the vote was 3-2 in favor of discussing it further.

On February 9, 2015, the planning commission conducted a public hearing on the ordinance amendment. One person, Mike Lane, representing the Building Industry Association, spoke in opposition to the proposed ordinance change. In addition, three individuals, Eric Shannon from CRS Farms, Matt Ainley from 4Creeks Engineering, and Matt Smith from Woodside Homes, submitted correspondence in opposition to the proposal. The Planning Commission closed the public hearing and voted unanimously against changing the ordinance.

Lane began the evening's public comment period by saying that allowing the council to appeal planning commission decisions creates a dangerous potential for arbitrary council decisions. He said that this amendment would add time and expense to the process of new developments. He added that the planning commission should be the judicial branch in land use decisions, not the council.

Brett Taylor, a former member of the planning commission and a local realtor, reminded the council that the planning commission voted 5-0 against the amendment. He said that the new ordinance would slow down development and cost more. In the two other cities that have a similar ordinance, Porterville and Bakersfield, it is harder and more costly to get plans approved.

Gail Zurick of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce said that the chamber's members were universally against amending the ordinance. The members feel that the current process is fair and upfront, and city council should not add any more layers to getting a development approved.

Collins reiterated that the final decision on developments rests with the city council and that the council has a right to weigh in and freely discuss what the General Plan says. The General Plan was loosely written and what a developer may think as a high-density or contiguous neighborhood, a council member may not. Collins said, he felt that developers do not want additional scrutiny on their projects. He said, they feel secure with the planning commission and that fundamentally the "developers don't want the decisions to get to the council and I have a problem with that."

Council member Bob Link said that the council very carefully picks the planning commission members for their qualifications and for their ability to make decisions that are consistent with how the city council feels.

Mayor Nelsen said that during the four years that the ordinance allowed council members to appeal decisions he felt that they didn't have a good relationship with the planning commission. He didn't agree with it then and he doesn't agree with it now. Nelsen felt the ordinance goes against what Visalia is all about.

Gubler said that he had voted in January to discuss the ordinance and was sitting on the fence. But after talking to the community, the Visalia Economic Development Corporation, the Chamber, the Home Builders Association and former and present planning commission members who were are all universally opposed to changing the process, he was going to vote no.

The vote in January to bring the ordinance up for discussion was 3-2, with Nelson and Link opposing. The vote on the evening of April 6 was 1-4, with Collins voting yes.

### City Increases Impact Fees

In one of the last items of the evening, the city staff recommended that the council consider updating of the Transportation Impact Fee rates.

During the economic downturn Visalia lowered, or kept steady, their impact fees to incentivize developers to build in Visalia instead of going somewhere else. This resulted in a $2.5 million deficit. Raising the fees now would not make up for lost ground, but would let the city break even in the future.

During a public hearing on the issue in March, staff recommended that council approve a fee schedule that would increase all categories by 11 percent, thereby providing an economic incentive "for both industrial/service commercial and hotel/motel development." Keeping any increase to 11 percent would give developers an incentive to build here because other area cities charge more.

The city council voted 5-0 to raise the impact fee by 11 percent across the board, but exempted Industrial and service commercial. Cities up and down Highway 99 present very attractive packages to entice developers to build their warehouses in their industrial parks, and Visalia must remain proactive in staying competitive.

# Viewpoint

## Macareno: A Reply to Joe Altschule

Joe Altschules assessment of me in his letter to the *Valley Voice* on April 2 is amusing. Considering the fact that we don't know each other. We have not spoken to each other in any kind of conversation. He has never attended a central committee meeting that I have presided over. Nor have we had any kind of communication with each other and we obviously circulate in different circles.

So who is this Joe to make an educated assessment of me to the public?

The only thing I know of Joe is that we both hold/held the titles of Central Committee chairman and we write columns, many times for the *Visalia Times-Delta* and *Tulare Advance-Register*. Of which I would like to interject that on May 16 in those papers' editorial pages stated, "His (Ruben Macareno) commitment is unquestioned and he is a strong leader among Democrats in Tulare County."

For someone to be a practicing attorney and an occasional columnist I find his public attack biased and personal to say the very least. Could this be a personal rivalry I knew nothing of? His comments are based on third party opinions—from the same individuals who oppose me and who gave him an award a couple of weeks ago—and frankly beneath the positions he holds. His character assassination of who I am is baseless, shallow, petty and irresponsible.

I deal in the world of facts not innuendo or "he said, she said" sources or type of politics. Let's deal with facts.

Joe doesn't offer the disclaimer that he was the opposing attorney to my late brother Martin Macareno who was president of the Farmersville School Board. He doesn't mention in his letter that he was in fact ousted by the Central Committee where I have the full support of my committee.

Furthermore, as a former chair of the Central Committee he knows that the central committee bylaws state that the chairman is the sole spokesperson for the organization and not the "quest for self-aggrandizement" that he accuses me of. However I am sure he thought people don't know this and it sounds good in the papers.

He also gives me too much credit when stating that I convinced a statewide constitutional officer from coming to Visalia. I didn't know I had that much pull but Joe apparently thinks I do. Perhaps credit is due to the state officer and his staff who clearly identified the issue of attending an unauthorized Democratic event "not smart" and didn't want any part of it. As a result he attacks me and State Treasurer John Chiang for literally doing the right thing.

Finally, I have nothing to say about Joe. All I have are the facts I presented. I don't know him enough to offer an evaluation of who he is and what his intentions are. I will not go beneath what is fair and decent.

*Ruben Macareno*
*Chairman*
*Tulare County Democratic Party*

## A 9/11 Truth Engineer Spoke via Skype in Visalia

Dan Noël, engineer, from Costa Mesa, Orange County, spoke to a group of concerned citizens regarding the three skyscrapers that suddenly experienced a rapid and complete destruction at the World Trade Center on 9-11-01: the Twin Towers and Building 7.

He showed how the video record of the events overwhelmingly contradicts the official explanation of a destruction by airplane impact or office fires, while clearly suggesting a destruction by controlled demolition.

He explained how the official technical reports on these matters appear to be aimed at covering up the controlled demolitions and protecting their authors.

Moreover, this fraud is so obvious that lay people with no formal technical education can understanding it through no more than a moderate intellectual exercise.

Noël left the audience pondering the alarming conclusion that many institutions, from Congress to State governments to the mass media to technical institutions to liberal groups to anti-war analysts to Muslim governments, could effortlessly denounce 9/11, enhance their prestige, and spare humanity the war, fear and poverty that 9/11 has inspired, yet have not done so.

Attend a potluck at 1213 S. Fairway St., Visalia at 6 pm on April 18th for Dan's next presentation

*Roy J. Kendall*

## Rep. Nunes Reacts to California Water Restrictions

Washington, D.C. – Congressmen Devin Nunes (CA-22) today released the following statement in reaction to California Governor Jerry Brown's announcement that he would implement mandatory water restrictions throughout California:

"California's natural drought has not caused the water crisis in the Central Valley, where the irrigation system was built to withstand five consecutive years of drought. I'd prefer to see the crisis here solved by simply restoring our previous water flows, rather than flushing our water out into the ocean and then implementing intrusive water restrictions that will do little or nothing to solve the problem. Now that he has resorted to water rationing, I hope Governor Brown will reconsider his opposition to the bills passed by the House of Representatives over the last four years that would relieve the water crisis, and that he will begin cooperating with us on a solution."

Devin

## "The People Themselves Are Responsible for Policing Local Government"

The inquest began with Judge Valeriano Saucedo taking the stand in his own defense. Initial questioning centered around his background, and emphasized his many friends, family and colleagues who obviously care for and respect the man. Interwoven with Saucedo's career is a particular thread of affirmative action against "whites" which predominates much of his path to the bench. As a child of migrant farm laborers, he rose to his current office as a solon of the California judiciary, through a legal career heavily influenced by the Chicano Movement of the 1960's. His socioeconomic and geopolitical migration from Texas to California, inspires a quote from the late Ceasar Chavez:

"Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore. We have seen the future, and the future is ours."

Indeed, as Valeriano himself testified, early in life he began basing his decisions on a racial disparity with Caucasians that deeply influenced his pursuit of judicial power.

"When I was a kid, I decided that because I'm Hispanic, I would never get ahead if I was only as good as the white kids around me."

This outlook against "whites", he claims, was the driving force that compeled him to become the mayor of the City of Lindsay in 1990's, which he describes at that time as being "too white." In fact, many of those who appeared to testify on his behalf were themselves from his many years with California Rural Legal Assistance, and his focus on assisting farm workers. The focus of the his current inquest aside, Judge Saucedo has led a remarkable career.

Not surprisingly, the most probative insight into the scandal centered around the testimony of a few of his fellow court officers. Priscillar Tovar, Judge Saucedo's former court clerk, gave a compelling recount of judicial favors that early on crossed the threshold between simple "mentoring" and gross fraternization. Against the bookend testimonies of the obviously reluctant Kim Werth and that of a frank Theresa Velasquez, the panel and public gained a dimensional view of what took place between Judge Saucedo and Mrs. Tovar. Poignantly, both parties concluded their individual testimonies by admitting remorseful ownership for letting the relationship between them get out of hand.

Toward the end of trial on April 10, Saucedo retook the stand, this time spending more time testifying of his remorse for not "going to HR sooner" and generally failing to keep his control over Tovar's responsive greed in professional limits. Whether Judge Valeriano Saucedo is indeed remorseful of abusing his office as a California judge – or simply remorseful of getting caught, Examiner Harrigan's last question to Saucedo on the stand focused on Saucedo's other vow. "Are you remorseful you spent your wife's community property on Mrs. Tovar?" The picture that eventually emerged was of a judge at once far too comfortable with abusing his judicial authority, and an all-too-human clerk who let Saucedo's money and influence lure her closer.

Of particular note was the time frame of Saucedo and Tovar's inappropriate relationship,

from August to December of 2013. The momentum-without-brakes they created finally culminated in Saucedo's threatened suicide on November 3rd, a scant thirteen days after he issued the allegedly frauded "seizure warrant" in the Bill Fabricius matter earlier reported in the Valley Voice.

Beyond the salacious aspect of their affair, a more troubling concern arising during trial was that Saucedo's readiness to cover for Mrs. Tovar through falsification of court documents. In light of documents demonstrating he willfully falsified court records (a revelation overlooked by other coverage), the question now is, how many other records of the court were in fact falsified? Where it was revealed that Judge Saucedo frauded overtime records, instructed others to lie, and was willing to intervene in other court cases on Tovar's behalf, perhaps Mr. Fabricius' claims of a falsified "seizure warrant" signed by Judge Saucedo are not so far afield.

While, by the end of trial, Judge Saucedo's reputation as a caring and hard-working advocate for minorities was undeniable, the prosody of the inquest is best summed up by Tovar's recount of something Judge Saucedo demonstrably sought to emphasize to her repeatedly. She testified that Judge Saucedo told her, "I am a very powerful man." A statement homogenous to Saucedo's own toward explaining why he pursued a career in law. "Lawyers can exercise a great deal of power."

Under the circumstances, this writer is inclined to remind residents of Tulare County the people themselves are responsible for policing local government. To ignore this responsibility is to increase the likelihood that friends and family will continue to fall prey to "Ferguson-like" government officials whose morality succumbs to the erosive power of judicial office. As Lord Acton has famously said:

"Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority; still more when you superadd the tendency of the certainty of corruption by authority."

*Roy J. Kendall*

# Columns & Letters

## Online Comments

Comment at ourvalleyvoice.com or fb.me/ourvalleyvoice

"Mr. Fabricius' dogs were vicious and killed livestock. He calls himself the Animal Husband and TCAC was justified in seizing his animals."

— ***Kelly**, on **Guest Commentary on Animal Control from Ronald Pierce***

"The government does not have the right to make false allegations, call them facts, then prosecute you without evidence. As illustrated in this story, a county agency using obscure laws have committed a crime by stealing Mr. Fabricius' pets and killing them, under the color of law. That's a civil rights violation. Thanks to the author and the publication for covering this important story."

— ***Raquel Okyay**, on **Guest Commentary on Animal Control***

"Tulare County is a cesspool of back channel politics and County Counsel manipulation to avoid accountability and liability.

They attack county residents and then pretend to administer impartial court hearings where the decision always goes in the County's favor; not surprising considering the "hearing officers" they hire themselves know where their pay comes from.
http://www.ourvalleyvoice.com/2015/03/19/new-developments-in-suit-against-tcac/

The only thing stopping Tulare County from being caught in a major judicial corruption scandal is the fact that the public still remains largely blissfully unaware and uninterested in looking into it. Simple public records requests can be done for free and would reveal stygian corruption centered in and around Tulare County Animal Control, but no one is really looking at the problem, as far as I can tell, beyond the coverage of this emerging problem by the Valley Voice."

— ***Ronald Pierce**, on **New Developments in Suit Against TCAC***

"The dispositive issue here is meaningful, effective oversight and accountability of Tulare County government employees. And there is none. Instead, you have a classic code of silence and the cover up of misconduct, if not criminal activity. Among other obvious violations of law and government employee ethical standards, the taxpaying citizens of Tulare County are being denied the right to honest government services, a federal crime under 18 USC 1346. With any luck, the federal government will get involved and conduct a thorough investigation. People should go to jail, including and especially Judge Saucedo and the rest of the redneck peckerwoods that operate the ultimate – albeit hopelessly corrupted – oversight authority, the county court system."

— ***Cathy Cohen**, on **Guest Commentary on Animal Control***

"The Democratic Party in Tulare is as relavent as a pet rock."

— ***Doni Lewis**, on **State Party Finds Local Democrats Unfairly Sanctioned***

"'Feel'? A formal ruling was made at the state party level, yet Macareno continues to attribute what amounts to an arbitrary and unwarranted purge of members to a "personality clash." It has to be a tin ear… or his determination to turn the party into another Bolshevik style cult-of-personality regime. I was referring to this statement (of Macareno's): "I still feel very strongly about that. They purposefully went out to undermine the Central Committee. That's what the trial was all about," Macareno said. "There won't be another attempt (to remove members). But, if we find another reason, we won't hesitate."

— ***Renee Lapin**, on **State Party Finds Local Democrats Unfairly Sanctioned***

"The Above statements maybe true but i also experienced the Corruption of the police department at first hand and the discrimination racism due to the fact i am a African american man who was faslely accused of crimes i did not commit and have no involement in 5 years of my life where taking from me and i spent time in a hell cell where my freedom was took my case had a bunch of descreptencies but they did not want to lose out on money so they did not let my lawyer do his job they convinced him to make a deal with them due to the fact that his status would elevate i also paid him to fight for my freedom and he didnt it is sad how peoples lives are affected due to the greedy and unjust so called peace officers who abuse there badges and authority"

— ***Keith**, on **New Allegations Made Against Sheriff's Department***

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On Facebook at facebook.com/ourvalleyvoice

## Apéritif

**Mercedes Oldenbourg**

### Veteran's Corner

## New Forms Required to File a Claim

**Joe Wright**

As of March 24, 2015, VA requires veterans and survivors to use standardized forms when filing their claims and appeals. The standardized forms enable claimants to clearly identify the symptoms or conditions for which they are seeking benefits, while helping to ensure VA receives the information needed to process their claims. These forms are designed to capture the specific information VA needs to process compensation, pension, and other benefit claims. Those who filed their claim prior to March 24, 2015, do not need to refile.

Veterans and survivors who need additional time to gather the information needed to support their claims may use the optional intent to file process. Submission of the new form, Intent to File a Claim for Compensation and/or Pension, or Survivors Pension and/or DIC, protects the claimant's effective date while allowing the claimant up to 1 year to collect supporting information and submit the appropriate application form.

Veterans wishing to initiate appeal of a VA disability compensation decision issued after March 24, 2015, are now required to express their disagreement through submission of the VA form, Notice of Disagreement. Veterans and their representatives previously used the form on an optional basis. Veterans and Survivors are not required to use a standardized notice of disagreement form for pension or survivors benefits at this time.

While there are several ways for the veteran and their survivors to file a claim, visiting our office has some distinct advantages over filing a claim on your own. We have professionally trained and accredited Veterans Advocates that will assist in gathering necessary documentation, build a complete claims package, and file the claim with the VA. After filing, we will track the claim through the VA process to completion. This is a free service offered by the Kings County Veterans Service Office.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office issues Veteran I.D. cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Joe Wright if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com.

*Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call 852-2669; or e-mail joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us.*

Veterans who attend Veterans Opportunity Day have the opportunity to meet county employers, review resumes, learn about job opportunities and services employers can offer veterans, learn about benefits and CalVet home loan information, and lost record replacement.

Veterans can also enjoy meeting friends and eating lunch. There is no charge for this event and all veterans are welcome.

Who: Tulare County Veterans

What: Veterans Opportunity Day

When: Wednesday, April 22, 2014, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. {Lunch will be served at no cost}

Where: Tulare Veterans Memorial Building, 1771 E. Tulare Ave., Tulare.

# Memorable Fox Moments: Tell Your Story

**Staff Reports**

Co-Executive Directors Erin Olm-Shipman and Matthew Spindler are on a quest for THE story that best represents the theme for the Visalia Fox Theatre's 85th anniversary celebration and fundraiser on Friday, May 8.

"We're particularly interested in life-changing experiences that happened at the Fox," Olm-Shipman noted. "The selected Memorable Fox Moment will be filmed in April and played on the big screen prior to the main feature on May 8. History should be told through the eyes of those who lived it, and this is a way for us to recognize members of the community that have faithfully supported us through the years."

Movies inspire us – lead us to new ventures and chapters in our lives. Many can trace life's path to the theatre, where a movie spoke to them, moved them, changed them.

Do you have a story from the Visalia Fox Theatre that changed your life? An indelible experience forever etched in your mind and heart? A moment so powerful you remember the movie, the people you were with, the smell of the popcorn – every detail as if it happened only yesterday? Was it an inspiring movie that changed your career path? Was it a first date that led to marriage? Maybe a wedding proposal? Did a newsreel influence you to enlist in the army, or perhaps join the Peace Corps?

The Visalia Fox Theatre, in association with Revolier Films, will film and produce the best story, which will be showcased at the 85th anniversary event.

"We hope to have the opportunity to film many more stories throughout the year to screen prior to Fox events, and feature permanently on our website," Spindler said.

"It's a great idea, and Brian Keith and I are honored to have a hand in producing these nostalgic moments," said Scott Seargeant, executive director at Revolier Films.

If you have a Memorable Fox Moment, please contact Erin Olm-Shipman at eolmshipman@foxvisalia.org, Matthew Spindler at mspindler@foxvisalia.org, or by phone at 559.625.1369.

If you are interested in sponsoring a Memorable Fox Moment, the cost is $300 and will include recognition in the opening and closing credits.

Discounts are available for two or more Memorable Fox Moments sponsorships.

The Visalia Fox Theatre's 85th Anniversary Celebration and Fundraiser will take place at 7:30pm (doors open at 7pm) on Friday, May 8.

The evening will include a screening of The Lone Star Ranger – the first film to be shown when the theatre opened its doors in 1930.

The event will also feature a live organ performance, treats from the A&W Root Beer Mobile, a silent auction and more.

Admission prices are the same as they were on opening day--10 cents for children, 50 cents for adults, and 65 cents for loge seating.

Event sponsorships are available at levels starting at $250, and include admission to a catered pre-show reception and champagne toast.

Valley Voice
Valley Scene

## Sharon Banister Shows 'Colorful Interpretations'

**Donna Orozco**

Sharon Banister will show her acrylic paintings entitled "Colorful Interpretations," depicting historical buildings of downtown Hanford along with landscapes and still-life paintings, at the Brandon-Mitchell Gallery, located in the Spiritual Awareness Center, in April and May. An artist reception will be during the First Friday art walk on May 1 from 5:30-8pm.

"I paint fairly loosely and try to paint how the subject feels rather than exactly as it looks," says Banister. "I love color and often exaggerate the colors I see."

She has painted most of the historic buildings in Hanford, including such well-known buildings as the Bastille (old jail) and Superior Dairy.

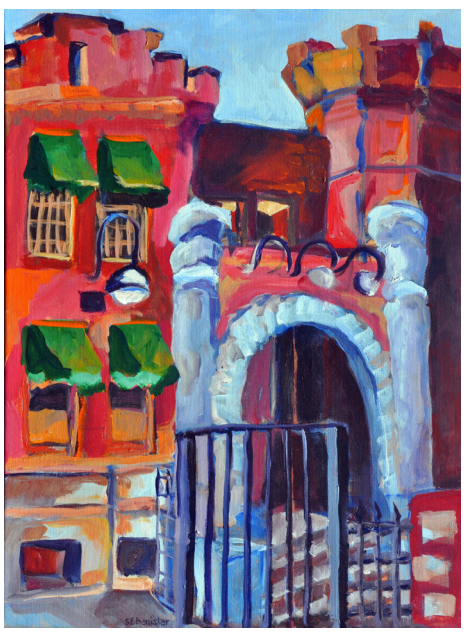
Although she earned a master's degree in art from CSU Fresno in 1997, it wasn't until she retired in 2007 that she became more involved in art. She now paints "en plein air" every Tuesday morning with a group of like-minded ladies and co-hosts a weekly open studio at the Kings Art Center, where local artists meet to paint together.

"Although I was educated in art, for many years I didn't believe myself to be a 'real artist.' As I have painted pretty continuously for the past several years, I am happy to report that I now believe myself to be a 'professional artist.'"

Banister is a retired medical technologist who lives in Hanford. She is a member of the Kings Art Center as well as a long-standing member of the Kings County Art League prior to its inclusion in the Art Center and volunteers at various art-related events and activities.

Her work can be seen in various local venues, as well as in Colors Gallery in Three Rivers.

The Brandon-Mitchell Gallery is located at the Spiritual Awareness Center, 117 S. Locust Street, Visalia, and is open the first Friday of each month, 5:30-8pm,and by calling the center at 625-2441.



Bastille, formerly Kings Co. Jail

## 10th Annual Habitat for Humanity Birdhouse Auction to be Held May 1

Habitat for Humanity of Tulare County will celebrate 20 years of serving low-income families in our community at the 10th Annual Birdhouse Auction, Friday, May 1 at the Visalia Holiday Inn.

The unique event was started by Lonnie and Laurie Tieseira as a "friend-raiser" at their home in Tulare. The "birdhouse" theme seemed to lend itself perfectly to the Habitat for Humanity vision that every man, woman, child and yes, even birds, should have a decent place to live.

Photo courtesy Habitat for Humanity

At the first Birdhouse Auction, 20 items, including 12 "birdhouse themed" items, were auctioned to the highest bidder, raising funds to support Habitat for Humanity's "New Home" building program.

Since 2008, much of the event's proceeds support Habitat's home repair program, "A Brush With Kindness". With this support, Habitat has been able to help more than 250 homeowners who are challenged by age, disability or circumstance.

These critical home repairs have made a real difference in the lives of the homeowners whom Habitat has worked with in Tulare County.

The Birdhouse Auction event is from 6:30-10 pm and includes dinner. Tickets are $75/each or $600 for a table of eight. Sponsorships are available.

For more information and to attend the Habitat for Humanity Birdhouse Auction, contact Deanna at 734-4040, email info@hfhtc.org. or register on line at www.hfhtc.org.

## Student Art Exhibition Comes to PC Gallery

**Staff Reports**

The Porterville College student body is once again showing off its artistic talent with the help of the Porterville College Art Department and the PC Art Club.

The Porterville College Art Department invites the public to come view its annual Student Art Exhibition, featuring the best work from current PC art students in a variety of media from photography, painting, drawing, digital imaging, sculpture and more, through April 30.

Artwork by Sawn Plumlee-Jones

The public is also invited to the reception on Thursday, April 16 from 5-7pm, where refreshments will be served. The gallery is open Monday through Thursday from noon – 2pm and 4 – 6pm through April 30.

Parking is unrestricted during the time of the reception. For other times, contact the information desk (located in the administration building) when you arrive to visit the show for a free temporary parking permit.

Porterville College is located at 100 East College Ave. in Porterville. For more information contact Jim Entz at (559) 791-2257.

## Belinda Gail to Play Mavericks Coffee House April 24

**Staff Reports**

Mavericks Coffee House welcomes back longtime Visalian Belinda Gail--America's Western Sweetheart--to her hometown for a Friday, April 24 show. The seven-time Western Music Association's (WMA) Female Performer of the Year, Gail recently won the 2014 Western Album of the Year for her critically acclaimed album Granite Mountain. Now residing with her husband in Prescott, Arizona, Gail is looking forward to coming back to Visalia to perform and to see old friends and family.

Belinda Gail

In addition to collecting seven WMA awards for Female Vocalists of the Year and the recent Album of the Year award, Gail has won the Academy of Western Artists (AWA) Female Vocalist of the Year; WMA's Traditional Duo/Group Award three times with the late Curley Musgrave; and WMA's Traditional Album of the Year, 2007's Red Rock Moon with Curley Musgrave. She was also named by American Cowboy Magazine as one of the top 50 Country and Western Entertainers of all time, along with the likes of Marty Robbins, Johnny Cash, Don Edwards and her buddy RW Hampton, among others.

"She reminds her legions of faithful fans that she IS a cowgirl," said Juni Fisher, "and she can yodel, sing like a bird, and break your heart with her renditions of great western songs."

Seating is limited for the 7pm show, and tickets ($25) are available by calling

## TCOE Students Perform Into the Woods and Winnie the Pooh Kids

**Staff Reports**

Students in Tulare County Office of Education's Theatre Company are preparing for the program's annual spring musical - a production full of familiar children's storybook characters.

Beginning Thursday, April 30, audiences can enjoy "two productions in one" with first- through sixth-grade students performing the adorable Winnie the Pooh Kids, while middle and high school students present Into the Woods. More than 110 students have spent the semester rehearsing for the production.

Director Charlotte Garcia Da Rosa reports that Winnie the Pooh Kids was written by the same composers who wrote the music for Frozen.

"It's a wonderful musical and we are fortunate to have phenomenally talented young leading actors playing the beloved animal friends of Christopher Robin," she said

Into the Woods is a Tony Award-winning musical that includes lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. The musical intertwines several of Brothers Grimm fairy tales. The main characters are taken from Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, Rapunzel and Cinderella, as well as several others.

"The challenge for students in Into the Woods was to re-imagine famous fairytale characters as real life people with real life problems," says Garcia Da Rosa. "The kids have done an amazing job interpreting Stephen Sondheim's challenging musical score. It's also very exciting that the Disney-produced film version of the musical has added to the popularity and love of the show!"

Show times and ticket information: Evening shows will be held April 30, May 1 and May 2 at 7:00 p.m. A matinee show will be offered Saturday, May 2 at 2:00 p.m. General admission tickets are $10 per person and available during normal business hours at two TCOE Visalia locations: 2637 West Burrel Avenue and 7000 Doe Avenue, Suite A. All performances will be held at the Rotary Theater located at 330 S. Dollner St. in Visalia.

For information about the Theatre Company and the musical production, call director Brian Roberts at (559) 651-1482.

# Other Desert Cities Comes to Visalia's Ice House Theatre

**Irene Morse**

Drive eastbound on I-10 through the high desert and you'll come across a sign that reads, "Indio, California and Other Desert Cities." Playwright Jon Robin Baitz based the title of his Pulitzer Prize nominated play, Other Desert Cities, on that sign. He set the action in Palm Springs, a get-away destination for the rich, famous and generally conservative.

The Visalia Community Players are proud to present this work at the Ice House Theatre. Director Donny Graham has guided his cast through the potential pit-falls of the complex family drama. The story revolves around the Wyeth family and the disruptive quality of family secrets.

It is 2004 and the Wyeth family has gathered together for the Christmas holiday for the first time in many years. They are a well-connected Hollywood family who, according to Graham, "share a family secret that becomes a ghostly undercurrent of hidden family guilt."

The family is headed by, Lyman Wyeth, portrayed by Thomas Nance, a former actor and retired ambassador appointed by Ronald Reagan. His wife, Polly, played by Nancy Holley, is "a disciple of Nancy Reagan" and is used to entertaining dignitaries.

Krystle McWells takes on the role of Brooke, the family's mentally fragile daughter. Brooke has written a memoir, soon to be published. The book will expose the long-held secret and possibly derail the entire family.

Thom Crowe plays Trip, the favored youngest child. Easy-going Trip is the producer of a TV reality show and is, in some ways, the family peacemaker.

Silda, played by Robin Hoffman, is Polly's sister. They used to write a movie series together, but Silda has been living with the Wyeths since her stint in rehab. Silda is prickly and liberal which poses challenges for both Lyman and Polly.

The NY Post writes that the play is, "Astutely drawn…juicy and surprising." Holley agrees. She thinks it is a production that, "Everyone can relate to and perhaps learn that we frequently make relationships harder than they need to be for what we see as the best of reasons."

The New York Times has written that this is, "The most richly enjoyable play for grown-ups that New York has known in many seasons." Other Desert Cities contains adult language and mature content.

On Sunday, April 26, the matinee, "Back Stage at the Ice House" will be hosted by Sharon DeCoux, a veteran Visalia Player.

Audience members will have an opportunity for a behind the scenes look at the show and the opportunity to ask questions and interact with cast/crew.

Other Desert Cities runs for three weekends at the Ice House Theater at Race and Santa Fe in Visalia. Evening performances are at 7:30 p.m. on 4/17, 4/18, 4/24, 4/25, 5/1, and 5/2, and matinees are at 2:00 p.m. on 4/19, 4/26, and 5/3.

To purchase tickets go to the Visalia Players' website at www.visaliaplayers.org, their Facebook page "Visalia Community Players", or call 734-3900.

# Lindsay Orange Blossom Festival Art Show to be Held April 24-May 31

**Staff Reports**

The Lindsay Art Association is preparing to hold its annual Orange Blossom Festival Art Show.

A "Call to Artists" throughout Tulare County has gone out for artists to bring their paintings, weaving, ceramics, gourds, sculpture, digital work and photography to the Museum Gallery, 165 N. Gale Hill (next to the Fire Station) in Lindsay on Monday, April 20 or Tuesday, April 21 between 12 noon and 6pm.

This is a judged show. Ribbons will be awarded in the "open" Division to Adults and College students. There will also be a Student Division (ages 9-12).

"Open:" artists are invited to submit up to 3 pieces of original art (Max. size: 48" length or width, framed). All 2-dimensional artwork must be framed and ready to hang. Fees: 1st piece: $5.00, 2nd piece: $3.00, 3rd piece: $2.00.

The reception for the Art Show will be held on Friday, April 24, 5-7 pm. This event, which is open to the public, will also feature the 2015 Orange Blossom Festival Queen and her Court, as well as the Honored Person, LaWanda Wollenman.

This reception culminates a week of appearances by the Queen and Court as well as Ms. Wollenman during which they have been honored by service clubs, at churches, and businesses. Their final event will be in the Orange Blossom Parade which takes place on Saturday, April 15 from downtown Lindsay out to the Park/Golf Course, starting at 10 a.m. Members of the community will follow the parade to the park for an afternoon of music, food, games and craft sales.

For more information about the Art Show, call 359-3410 or 562-2009.

# Healthy Lifestyles Opens in Visalia

Total Healthy Lifestyle has opened a center and practice in Visalia.

Jennifer Brandolino, a registered nurse of 29 years, opened the center with her husband, Robert. Jennifer Brandolino has a diploma in Biochemic Therapy and certifications in Homeopathy, Jin Shin Jyutsu and Flower Essence Therapy.

Robert and Jennifer Brandolino

In her practice she conducts a thorough consultation, customizes remedies and applies Jin Shin Jyutsu, similar to acupuncture but without needles. She uses all four therapies together for a comprehensive approach to wellness. She strives to spend ample time with each client offering individualized care and reasonable prices.

All therapies are safe, gentle, have no harmful side effects and will not interact with any treatments or medications one may be taking. Jennifer is fluent in Spanish and English, and helps people of all ages, from infants to seniors, as well as pets.

At their center, the Brandolinos teach Jin Shin Jyutsu, self-help classes where individuals will learn simple techniques to do anytime, to assist with worry, fear, anger, grief, depression, anxiety and many other issues.

In the center there is a unique selection of organic and healthier snacks ranging from 100% grass-fed beef jerky to organic, gluten-free and sugar-free snacks.

For those battling health issues addressing the root cause with natural therapies and remedies may help.

Total Healthy Lifestyle is inside the Sequoia Mall, at the corner of Caldwell and Mooney. For more information, call (559) 553-2172 or visit, www.TotalHealthyLifestyle.com

# Education

## Community Input on Boundary Changes for Visalia Schools

**Craig Wheaton, Ed.D., Superintendent**

For many months, we have been working on attendance boundary changes that will affect middle schools and high schools throughout the district. These changes will take effect in August, 2016, when the new middle school opens. It was just a couple of months ago that I wrote a short article about the boundary change process. Since that time, there has been a lot of activity, and I thought it would be good to give everyone an update on the process.

First, let me review what we are attempting to do. The challenge is how to draw the attendance boundaries. So, how do we decide on new boundaries? My answer to that is, "slowly, carefully, and with a lot of parent input."

As a parent, I know how hard it can be to change the school feeder system that you have relied on for many years. Home purchases may have been based on an assumption about schools your children would attend. Changing those basic assumptions can cause a great deal of anxiety.

We really found how true that statement was as we generated maps and took them out for public input. In February, we held five community meetings around the district where we reviewed map options and gained some valuable information. First, our community wants to keep kids together as they progress through elementary, middle and high school; secondly, there is a concern about socio-economic balance to reflect our community. We took parent input and reworked our maps, and those maps were taken back out to community meetings in March. We had several hundred parents attend the four meetings held in March.

The first dedicated School Board Study Session was held on April 7. It was well attended and many opinions, for and against particular options, were passionately expressed. This extensive parent input was exactly what our administration and school board members wanted. This information gives school board members a good sense of what the community would like to see. It also reminds us all that no matter what the final outcome happens to be, some people are going to be pleased and some will not.

We are nearing the end of the process; and in the end, a decision must be made. The board plans to have the final boundary changes adopted before the end of the school year. This is a one-year notice before the changes are implemented. The members of the Board of Trustees have the enormous responsibility to make the final decisions. I applaud their service to the community knowing this task is not an easy one. If you would like more information or would like to provide input, check our website, vusd.org or email me your comments, cwheaton@vusd.org

## Annual SCICON Barbecue Set For April 19

The 55th annual SCICON Barbecue and Wildflower Festival will be held Sunday, April 19. The event is an opportunity for families and individuals of all ages to tour and enjoy the SCICON campus.

The festivities begin at 11am, lasting until 4pm. SCICON staff will be on hand to lead wildflower walks and nature hikes. The SCICON planetarium, observatory and newly expanded museum of natural history will be open all day, and wildlife shows will be presented in the SCICON raptor center.

Resource agencies, including Sequoia National Forest, California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection (CalFire) and Tulare County Conservation Corps, will provide educational displays and activities. "Smokey the Bear" and special activities just for children will also be available. Entertainment will be continuous throughout the day. All visitors will receive a commemorative wildflower poster by local Springville artist, Frances Pyles. This year's poster, featuring the beautiful "Ithuriel's Spear," is suitable for framing.

A dedication ceremony of a new brick walkway, located by the bell tower, will be held at 1:30pm on the day of the barbecue. Established in honor and memory of longtime Friends of SCICON board member Dick Hoskins, the walkway will provide an opportunity for service clubs, businesses and families to purchase a brick to show support for SCICON. Each brick will be engraved with the donor's name and/or company logo. Bricks will be available for purchase at the barbecue, payable by cash, check or PayPal.

Two thousand pounds of beef will simmer underground for 24 hours and will be served with the famous SCICON barbecue sauce as part of lunch. Meal ticket donations are $10 for adults, $5 for seniors (60 and over) and $5 for children (12 and under.) All proceeds from the meal will go to the "Friends of SCICON" to benefit the SCICON program. There is no charge to participate in the day's activities.

"We appreciate the Friends of SCICON for coordinating this important event and for the support they provide the SCICON program," says County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. "We look forward to showing off the newly expanded Phyllis Wall Museum and welcoming friends – old and new – to the campus."

## Dairy Producers Begin Search for Royalty

The local dairy industry is now accepting applications from young women wishing to compete for the District 7 (Kings County) Dairy Princess crown.

The winner will represent the dairy industry in District 7 as a spokeswoman and will also represent the California dairy industry in appearances at schools, fairs, industry meetings, service clubs, parades, and with the media. The newly selected princess will participate in a week of training that includes industry tours, presentation and etiquette training.

Contestants must meet the following requirements: 1) Be at least a junior in high school up to 21 years of age by contest date; 2) Be unmarried; and 3) Family must own a dairy farm, work in the dairy industry or have a dairy-related background. Applicants are urged to submit their applications as soon as possible. The application deadline is Friday, May 1.

The District 7 contest is sponsored by the District 7 Dairy Princess Committee and the California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB). The gala event will be held Friday, June 26, at Hanford Civic Auditorium in Hanford. The evening begins at 6pm with a social hour and is followed by the contest and dinner at 7pm.

Current Dairy Princesses Alexis Mello of Hanford will relinquish her crown to the winner who will represent the dairy industry in Kings County. Scholarships will be awarded.

Application forms may be obtained from Carolina Evangelo (209)-777-8995, the CMAB office at (209) 525-6875 or they may be accessed online at www.californiadairypressroom.com

California is the nation's leading milk producer. It also produces more butter, ice cream, yogurt and nonfat dry milk than any other state. Dairy products made with Real California milk can be identified by the Real California Milk seal, which certifies that the products are made exclusively with milk produced on California dairy farms. The state is the second-largest producer of cheese, which is available nationally under the Real California Cheese seal.

## New Montessori School Finds Success in the Central Valley

**Visalia Montessori School**

For the 2015-16 school year, Visalia Montessori School (VMS) will more than double its student body, add a classroom, grade level and teachers. For the 2014-15 academic year, VMS has 10 students in the first and second grades, but because of the popularity of the Montessori system the school is expecting 20-30 next year.

The two-classroom building will be home to two lower-elementary classrooms for grades 1-3. Each school year; one grade level will be added until sixth grade. VMS is also accepting applications right now for grades 1-6 for summer school which will run from June 29 to -August 14.

VMS is an elementary Montessori option for incoming elementary students, whether or not they have Montessori experience. Tuition is $5940 for the academic year. VMS is located at 3502 South Linwood Street on the Northeast corner of Linwood Street and Caldwell Avenue.

Montessori education, based on the teachings of Dr. Maria Montessori, allows the child to progress through the hands-on curriculum at an individual pace. Using Montessori curriculum, materials, and philosophy, teachers guide children toward critical thinking and leadership while nurturing a love of learning.

VMS was founded in 2014 by Montessorians Nina Clancy and Melissa Dabadie. Clancy has served as co-owner and director of Greenhouse Montessori School since 1982, and as owner of A Place to Grow Montessori, founded in 2006. Dabadie is an AMS-certified Montessori teacher for children ages 6-12 and holds a current CA teaching credential. Visalia will soon be home to Montessori options for children ages 18 months through 12 years.

VMS has an active Parent Association that is hosting its second annual Builders Bash fundraiser.

The Visalia Montessori School Parent Association is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that raises funds for student and teacher training scholarships, projects, and classroom materials.

The festivities start at 6pm on Saturday, May 2, 2015 at 1620 W. Beverly Drive in Visalia, CA. The Builders Bash fundraiser will feature live music from Greenhouse Montessori School graduate Sam Gendel and Guitartist Fabiano do Nascimento, catering from Café 225, games, and a silent and live auction. Tickets are $50 for one or $80 per couple and are available online or at a place to grow Montessori, Greenhouse Montessori School, or Visalia Montessori School.

The VMSPA is also looking for additional sponsors and auction items. To donate, visit visaliamontessori.com/parents/foundersbash.

For more information about your child attending VMS or our Builders Bash fundraiser visit the website, or call 559-624-1374.

# Calendar

**Every Third Tuesday, Monthly: The League of Women Voters of Tulare County meets, 11:45am**
Enjoy lunch and a discussion at Sue Sa's Club House, 699 W. Center in Visalia. A fixed price luncheon for $13.00 inc. tax and tip will be served. The public is welcome. Reservations are required by calling 734-6501.

**Through June 4: Women of Tulare County**
This exhibit showcases these extraordinary women of Tulare County from 1855 to the present through a series of posters. Women featured include Josephine Allensworth, Anna Mills Johnston, Eleanor Calhoun, Ina Stiner, Annie Mitchell, Mary Garcia Pohot, Rose Ann Vuich, Jean Shepard, Lali Moheno, and Ester Hernandez. This exhibit is on the second floor of the Visalia Branch of the Tulare County Library outside of the Annie R. Mitchell History Room through June 4 and be. Exhibit hours are from 1--5pm, Tuesday--Friday. For more information on this exhibit, please contact Lisa Raney at 713-2723 or the reference desk at 713-2703. The Visalia Library is located at 200 W. Oak Ave, Visalia, CA 93291.

**Through June: Visalia Branch Library Teen Homework Center, 3-6:30pm**
The Visalia Branch Library offers a place for teens to do their homework Tuesdays through Fridays. The library is located at 200 W. Oak St.

**Through June: Tulare Public Library Homework Help**
Homework help for children in grades K-12 will be available in the Tulare Public Library Learning Center on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4-7pm and Saturdays from 1-4pm.

**Through October 28: Free Fly Casting Instruction, 6-7pm**
Kaweah Fly Fishers are offering fly casting lessons at Del Lago Park in Tulare every Wednesday evening until October 28. Rods and reels will be supplied or you may bring your own.

## APRIL

**April 16: Rumors of Polar Bears, 7pm (and April 17 at 4:30pm)**
La Joya Middle School proudly presents Rumors of Polar Bears by Jonathon Dorf through YouthPLAYS. Rumors of Polar Bears is about a ragtag band of teens who struggle for survival in the face of a climate induced catastrophe. Despite having to scavenge for food and water, they find fun where they can, frolicking in the 'party pool' and forgetting themselves just long enough to be teenagers. But when forced to flee their makeshift home, they'll encounter everything from failing paradises to a frozen-in-time former pre-kindergarten drama class, deadly bikers determined to turn the chaos into their own new world order, and a mysterious people that even the bikers won't cross. As the road takes its toll, relationships shift – what will happen to this little patchwork family?

**April 17 to 26: The Fantastic Mr. Fox**
The Enchanted Playhouse presents "The Fantastic Mr. Fox." The play will be presented on Friday and Saturday at 7pm, and Sunday at 2pm at Main Street Theatre, 307 E. Main, Visalia. For information, visit enchantedplayhouse.org.

**April 17: 2nd Annual Hands In the Community Golf Tournament, 12-5pm**
Hands in the Community will hold its second annual golf tournament at Valley Oaks Golf Course. Lunch provided. Raffle Tickets, Mulligan, Putting contest extra. $400.00 per Golf Team 1 Hole Sponsor $150.00 2 Hole Sponsor $250.00. For more information contact Lester Moon 559-625-3822.

**April 17: Book Signing and Free Workshop, 5:15-6:30pm**
A 45-minute workshop at the Cosmic Corral--209 N. Irwin St., Hanford, will help you decode your love style. Kay Packard's new book will teach you the fundamentals of how to read the unique markings found on your own hands. Assignments guide you to integrate both understood and misunderstood aspects of yourself into meaningful living-statements.

**April 17: Keith Sweat at Eagle Mountain Casino, 8pm**
Eagle Mountain Casino welcomes R & B Sensation Keith Sweat to the Event Center. Keith will be singing hits such as "Twisted", "I'll Give All My Love to You", and "I Want to Love you Down". His sensual and rhythmic lyrics will have you swooning, singing and dancing the evening away. Tickets on sale now online or in the gift shop and start at only $30. Summit Club and Black Card members receive $5 off tickets purchased in the gift shop.

**April 18: 24th Annual Walk A Dog A Thon/ Furry 5K**
Join us Saturday, April 18 at Plaza Park as we walk to raise money and save lives! Fun for all ages featuring a 3-mile walk, a chip-timed 5K run, vendors, raffle and canine contests. Entry fee $25 (minimum donation). Prizes will be given for the "Top Dog" Fundraiser in the following categories: Youth, Teen, Adult, Senior and Team (3 or more members). Ask your family, friends and co-workers to donate. Or form a team and get creative with themes or costumes. Make an online donation http://vospca.org/participate/donate/general-donation-form/

**April 18: Gravity! 1pm**
Learn what gravity does to you and why people seem to float while on the International Space Station. Then make a space station module with a floating astronaut in it! Explore the planets at ImagineU With a NASA ambassador in March, April and May. ImagineU Children's Museum is excited to have its very own NASA/Jet Propulsion Lab solar system ambassador, Susan Morrison, coming to Visalia to teach science in a fun, interactive way. These Saturday events are free with admission price (free for members). ImagineU is located at 700 E. Main St., Visalia. It is open Wednesday through Friday from 10-4 and Saturday from 12-4. Cost is $5 for adults and children 2 and over. Children under 2 are free. For more information, call 733-5975 or go to www.imagineumuseum.com

**April 18: Book signing, Free Mini-Hand-Readings, and Wine Tasting, 4:30-6:30pm**
At the Totem Market and Deli (under new management) – at the entrance to Sequoia National Park 45186 Sierra Drive, Three Rivers. Kay Packard's new book will teach you the fundamentals of how to read the unique markings found on your own hands.

**April 18: Colossal Collage, 7:30pm**
Tulare County Symphony Orchestra closes out its season with the "other" great Symphony No. 5, the one by Mahler. The concert will be held at the Visalia Fox Theatre. For information, visit tularecountysymphony.com.

**April 19: Spaghetti Feast Fundraiser, 11:30am-2pm**
Help make the Exeter Bark Park the best park in the Valley. Take home a delicious meal from Pete's Fresh Grill. Tickets are $10 and can be purchased from any member of the Bark Park committee, at Tangles Salon or the Exeter Chamber of Commerce. For more information call 592-5396

**April 21: Learn to Cut Like a Pro: Knife Skills by Candace's Catering, 6:30pm -**
Bring your own knife and cutting board to this fun, interactive demonstration to learn how to properly cut fruits and vegetables, plus all the different terminology for cutting and preparing food. The class will be in the glass barn at Ivanhoe's Historic Seven Sycamore Ranch. Cost is $25 per person.

**April 22: Labor Law Compliance Series, 7-10am.**
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with Pacific Employers, will present the state-mandated Supervisors' Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Seminar & Workshop at the Lamp Liter Inn. Registration & Breakfast 7:30-8 am; Seminar 8-10am. Reservations required. For more information call the Chamber, 734-5876.

**April 22: "Ecological Restoration in a Time of Mass Extinction" 11:30am-12:30pm**
Chief Scientist of the National Park Service, Dr. David Graber, will speak in the PC Theater. Conservation scientists around the globe are in broad agreement that the earth has entered a mass extinction event. Unlike past mass extinctions, which were associated with extreme geological events, it is evident that this event is the consequence of landscape conversion to human use, and anthropogenic global warming. As tragic as this is for those who value nature, there are encouraging examples of ecological restoration in our region ranging from individual species to whole ecosystems. The event is open to the public and free to attend. Please visit the front desk to obtain a parking permit.

**April 22: Kaweah Delta Wellness & You "Female Incontinence," 5:30-6:30pm**
At Sequoia Regional Cancer Center, 4945 W. Cypress Avenue, the speaker for this seminar will be Angela Duran, a physical therapist at Therapy Specialists, a division of Kaweah Delta Health Care District in Visalia. Carrie Davidson, a physical therapy assistant at Therapy Specialists, will also be a featured speaker.

**April 22 to May 1: Treasures of Ireland**
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce offers this group trip, which includes airfare, 11 meals and a professional travel guide. For information, call 734-5876.

**April 23: Honor A Hero, Hire A Vet Job & Resource Fair, 9am-2pm**
For Veterans, Military, National Guard, Reservist and their dependants, this year's job fair will be held in the Golden Eagle Arena at West HillsCollegeLemoorecampus,locatedat555CollegeAvenue in Lemoore. For more information call James Bradford at (559) 852-2151. including e

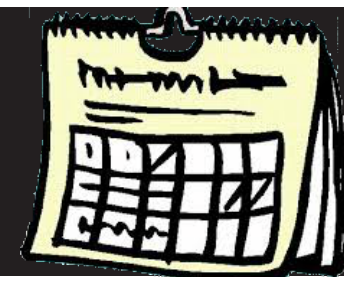
**April 23: The Visalia Chamber is hosting the 2nd Annual "State of Business Expo" 3-7pm**
The Business Expo highlights the best of the best in Visalia Business. We invite you to learn lessons from local entrepreneurs and partner with the Chamber as an active participant in the Expo. This event is a great way to highlight your business while networking in your community and partnering with your chamber of commerce

**April 23 & 24: Sleeping Beauty: A Musical Comedy**
Mt Whitney Drama Dept. proudly presents 'Sleeping Beauty: A Musical Comedy' on April 23rd and 24th at Rotary Theater. This show is an updated version of the modern tale including both opera and rock music. Doors open at 6:30pm, and show starts at 7:00pm. Tickets may be purchased at the door: $8 for Adults and $6 for students. You won't want to miss this charming play which is perfect for the entire family. For further information, please contact Stephanie Francis at 559-730-7602 or email sfrancis@vusd.org.

**April 24: Wellness and Informational Fair for Seniors, Families and Caregivers, 9am-2pm**
Wellness and Informational Fair for Seniors, Families, and Care givers at Quail Park Retirement Village from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. This event will provide information and resources for seniors and several free health screenings. Raffle prizes and refreshments. For additional information, please call 624-3503. Quail Park is located at 4520 W. Cypress Ave., Visalia.

**April 25: VMC Diabetes Walk, 8am**
Visalia Medical Clinic has set April 25 for its first Diabetes Walk in honor of the late Dr. James Mohs, an endocrinologist who worked with diabetic patients in Visalia for many years. The tribute walk begins with registration at 8am and kick-off at 9am. There is no fee to participate; a commemorative T-shirt will be available for $10 each. "The goal of the walk is to honor Dr. Mohs and to acknowledge the great influence he had on our community," explained Visalia Medical Clinic diabetes educator Susan Smith, Ph.D. "We also want to increase awareness of diabetes, encourage people to be more conscientious about their diabetes control and develop comaraderie."

**April 25: Civil War 360 Sprint Car Series**



Civil War 360 Sprint Car Series presented by Flowmaster will be held at Thunderbowl Raceway at Tulare Fairgrounds. Western RaceSaver Sprints and Vintage Cars will also be held. For information, visit www.thunderbowlraceway.com.

**April 25: A Cowboy Concert, 7-9pm**
RW Hampton and Belinda Gail will perform at Visalia's Calvary Chapel, with a gospel message by Pastor Bob Grenier. Admission is free.

**April 26: Downtown Visalia Sequoia Cycling Classic**
For information visit www.sequoiaclassic.com

**April 26: Be A Hero, 5-9pm**
Enjoy a beautiful evening under the stars. Evergreen Island in Tulare is hosting a benefit dinner and you're invited! This fundraiser benefiting Valley Oak SPCA and Marley's Mutts Dog Rescue is to recognize and honor the hard work rescue organizations and individuals do on behalf of homeless, unwanted, injured and abused animals. Meet the guests of honor and pets that have compelling stories of extreme rescue, like Bear. Come and meet special guest speakers including our very own Lydia House and Liz Kover from Marley's Mutts. It's sure to be a wonderful evening and hope to see you there.

**April 27: Great Conversations--"Out of the Cradle, Endlessly Rocking", 4-5:30pm**
A discussion of this Great Work by Whitman will take place on the COS main campus in Hospital Rock 133.

**April 28: Spring Cleansing: Foods to Detox by Candace's Catering, 6:30-7:30pm**
It's time to spring clean our bodies, so bring your appetite to this fun, interactive demonstration to learn how to juice to cleanse your body of toxins. You'll also learn which fruit or vegetable helps which organ or part of your body. Anyone who wants to aggressively live healthy should attend. The class will be in the glass barn at Ivanhoe's Historic Seven Sycamore Ranch. Cost: $25 per person.

**April 29: Kaweah Delta Wellness & You "Balance and Falls," 5:30-6:30pm**
At Sequoia Regional Cancer Center, 4945 W. Cypress Avenue, the speakers for this seminar will be David Surdyka, M.D., a local orthopedic surgeon, and Darci Alexander, a physical therapy assistant at Therapy Specialists.

**April 30: CASA Community Mixer, 5-7pm**
Court Appointed Special Advocates of Tulare County invites you to the CASA Community Mixer. Come learn about the many new options for making a difference in the lives of our mostvulnerable children at 210 W. Center Street, Visalia. Open to community members 21 and older. Learn about all the ways CASA volunteers help our abused and neglected children. Meet current CASA Advocates who can answer your questions. Enjoy delicious appetizers by Henry Salazar's, and enter to win one of the many Door Prizes. Bonus: If you bring a friend both of you will be entered into a drawing to win a $100 raffle ticket for the 1999 red Corvette convertible that will be given away at the May 15th "Once Upon a Dream" dinner and auction.

# MAY

**May 1: The 10th Annual Habitat for Humanity Birdhouse Auction, 6:30-10pm**
The Habitat for Humanity Birdhouse Auction will celebrate 10 years of fun and fundraising on Friday, May 1, 2015. This unique event brings together community leaders, creative artists and local flavors to support the vision that every man, woman and child should have a decent, affordable place to live. Tickets are $75 each. For more information call 734-4040.

**May 1: Date Night: Get Your Grill by Candace's Catering, 6:30pm**
Cooking with your love is a great way to spend quality time together, so grab your apron and your significant other for a romantic dinner on the farm. Whether it's a new love or you're forever love this fun, interactive date night will bring you together as you explore the possibilities of grilling together. Your meal will include a steak paired with wine, plus sides and dessert that you and your date will prepare at Ivanhoe's Historic Seven Sycamore Ranch. Cost: $100 per couple.

**May 2: Montessori Builders Bash, 6pm**
1620 W. Beverly Dr., Visalia. Tickets are $50 per person, $80 per couple.

**May 2: USAC Western Midgets**
USAC Western Midgets, Vintage Cars and Western RaceSaver Sprints will be held at Thunderbowl Raceway at Tulare Fairgrounds. For information, visit www.thunderbowlraceway.com.

**May 8: Business Seminar Series Diversity Training, 3:30-5pm**
At the train depot/Lemoore Chamber. Tickets $15 for members, $20 for non-members. For more information call (559) 924-6401.

**May 8: Girls Night Out: Tacos, Salsa, Margaritas, and Laughter! by Candace's Catering, 6:30pm**
This is the perfect cooking event to gather your girls together for a relaxing night that combines all your favorite things: Food, Friends, and Laughter. You'll learn some new twists on tacos, salsas, and margaritas using locally grown produce. Learning to cook will be so much fun! This fun, interactive night out will fill the barn with laughter, and satisfy your soul at Ivanhoe's Historic Seven Sycamore Ranch. Cost: $30 per person. Reserve your group of six or more by April 24 and save $5 per person.

**May 9: Exeter's 12th Annual Garden Walk, 9am-2pm**
Exeter, famous for its murals and known as one of America's Prettiest Painted Places is hosting its 12th Annual Full Bloom Garden Walk. Visitors are invited to explore beautiful and unique private gardens in and around the Exeter area. Be sure and take time to enjoy some refreshments hosted by Exeter's 2012 Business of the Year, By the Water Tower Antiques, relax in the ambiance of their lovely Victorian garden, 141 South B Street. Tickets, $20.00 in advance, are available in Exeter at the Exeter Chamber of Commerce and at By the Water Tower Antiques. Tickets will be available the day of the event, only at By the Water Tower Antiques.

**May 9: New Planets!! 1pm**
Make and launch a rocket to the Asteroid Belt. Play a board game to get your rocket to new planets Vesta and Ceres! Explore the planets at ImagineU With a NASA ambassador in March, April and May. ImagineU Children's Museum is excited to have its very own NASA/Jet Propulsion Lab solar system ambassador, Susan Morrison, coming to Visalia to teach science in a fun, interactive way. These Saturday events are free with admission price (free for members). ImagineU is located at 700 E. Main St., Visalia. It is open Wednesday through Friday from 10-4 and Saturday from 12-4. Cost is $5 for adults and children 2 and over. Children under 2 are free. For more information, call 733-5975 or go to www.imagineumuseum.com

**May 9: Barks & Bourbon, 5:30-10pm**
Friends of Tulare Animal Services is having its First Annual Barks & Bourbon to be held on May 9,2015, at Heritage Center Social Hall. Friends of Tulare Animals Services is the non-profit arm of Tulare Animal Services. We are a 501(c)(3), and are totally self funded through donations. We are raising funds to support our growing rescue efforts of shelter animals. Contributions to Friends of Tulare Animal Services are fully tax-deductible.

**May 11: Great Conversations-- excerpt from *Democracy in America*, 4-5:30pm**
A discussion of this Great Work by Tocqueville will take place on the COS main campus in Hospital Rock 133.

**May 12: Paris Nights: Crepes, Crepes, and more Crepes by Candace's Catering, 6:30-8pm**
Crepes have so many possibilities! During this fun, and interactive Paris-themed cooking demonstration, you'll learn to make different kinds of crepes, as well as preparing and putting together crepes as main dishes, snacks, and desserts. This is the perfect cooking event for every one of all ages. You'll be dreaming about walking the sidewalks of Paris as you bite into your crepe. But you'll really be in the glass barn at Ivanhoe's Historic Seven Sycamore Ranch. Cost: $30 per person.

**May 15: TCOE presents Slick Rock Student Film Festival, Noon to Midnight**
Premiere Screening and Awards Ceremony at Visalia Fox Theater. The Slick Rock Student Film Festival is Central California's premier film competition for middle and high school students in Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced and Tulare counties. It is a program of the Tulare County Office of Education with support from the Tulare & Kings Counties Suicide Prevention Task Force. Slick Rock challenges students to meet industry standards in the technical aspects of film production. The competition is divided into two levels: middle school and high school. Each level offers a variety of film genres for participation. For more information, contact Slick Rock staff at slickrock@tcoe.org.

**May 16: Chris & Brian Faria Memorial--King of the West 410**
Sprint Car Series, USAC West Coast 360 Sprint Cars, Western RaceSaver Sprints will be held at Thunderbowl Raceway at Tulare Fairgrounds. For information, visit www.thunderbowlraceway.com.

**May 19: Meal Prep: Improve Your Wellness by Planning to Eat Healthy, 6:30-7:30pm**
During this fun, interactive demonstration put on by Brooke Musselman, you'll see how easy it is to prepare your meals in advance in just one afternoon. Meal prep is the hottest trend for those who find it hard to find the time to eat healthy. This workshop will show you how to prepare your meals in advance, so you're more likely to eat better. This one hour workshop at Ivanhoe's Historic Seven Sycamore Ranch is designed to give you the ideas you need to get on the path of healthy eating. Cost: $15 per person.

**May 29: Date Night: A Taste of Italy, 6:30pm**
Spend an evening learning to create the favorite flavors of Italy with your partner. Cooking together is an intimate experience, and the most romantic flavors to taste together are the ones from Italy. Bring your camera and take advantage of Ivanhoe's Historic Seven Sycamore Ranch, a ibeautiful venue that is filled with romantic photo opportunities. Whether it's a new love or you're forever in love, this fun, interactive date night on the farm, which will bring you closer as you explore the tastes of Italy together. You will learn how to make gnocchi, limoncello, tiramisu, and more. Cost: $100 per couple.

**May 30: USAC West Coast 360 Sprints**
USAC West Coast 360 Sprints, USAC Western Midgets, Western RaceSaver Sprints and Vintage Cars will be held at Thunderbowl Raceway at Tulare Fairgrounds. For information, visit www.thunderbowlraceway.com.

# JUNE

**June 18: Visalia Chamber of Commerce 2015 Annual Awards Celebration, 6-9:30pm**
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce 2015 Annual Awards celebration honoring Man, Woman and Businesses of the Year will be held at the Visalia Convention Center. Tickets are $70.00 each or a table of 8 for $520.00

**June 19 to 28: Heritage of America**
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce will host a "Travel with the Chamber" trip, which includes airfare, 14 meals and a professional travel guide. Destinations include New York, Philadelphia, Amish Country, Gettysburg, Shenandoah Valley, Monticello, Williamsburg, Mount Vernon, Washington, D.C. and the Smithsonian. For information, call 734-5876.

**See more events online ourvalleyvoice.com**

# Sports

## Visalia Rawhide to Build on Last Year's Success

**Nancy Vigran**

On the heels of last year's Division win, the Visalia Rawhide want to not only do it again, but advance further in the California League finals. But, most of all, they just want to play good baseball.

This year's team, a division of the Arizona Diamondbacks, sees some returning players and a lot of new ones, with a new skipper at the helm.

Brenland Alamadova

Former major league catcher J.R. House was chosen as manager of the team this year. Last year, he served as coach of the Hillsboro Hops, a Diamondback affiliate rookie team.

House decided he wanted to manage while still catching in the majors. It was rather a natural fit, he said.

"As a catcher, you are pretty much the general of the team," he said.

Managing any team is not easy, and in the middle of the minors there is a lot of moving around of players throughout the season.

"You make the best of what you have at the time," House said.

Things can change from day to day, but in general, you do know of shifts before they happen.

"You can see some things coming in the future," he said.

His job is not only to manage the team, but to know the value placed on his players by the organization in general, he said.

"You want to treat everyone well," he said, "but it is impossible to treat everyone the same."

House sees many valuable players on his team, both newcomers and returning players.

"I am really looking forward to seeing them play every day," he said, while preparing to start the season.

Within a few weeks, he can better evaluate his bullpen and his hitters.

The Rawhide are large on pitchers, currently filling 15 spots of its total players. There are only a few outfielders.

Brenland Alamadova is one of those outfields, returning from last season. The Hawaii native was awarded the Rawlings Gold Glove Award as the best center fielder in Minor League Baseball last year.

"I am very happy and honored," Alamadova said. "It was a big surprise to me."

Alamadova started playing ball as a child and played in high school and at the University of Hawaii.

"My dad was a coach," he said. "He made me the person I am today."

While Alamadova, like most minor leaguers, aspires to play in the big leagues, the 24-year-old said he is just happy to be able to play ball every day.

"This is a new year, and I want to keep working hard and play ball."

Joey Krehbiel

Likewise, relief pitcher Joey Krehbiel, returns to the Rawhide after being traded to the Diamondback organization midyear last season.

"I appreciate wearing the jersey and having a number on my back," Krehbiel said.

His number is 25 and the right-hander can often be seen pitching the 7th and/or 8th inning, a role in which he feels comfortable.

The 22-year-old from Florida grew up playing many sports, but always favored baseball.

"My dad put a ball in my hand before I even knew what a ball was," he said.

A pitcher and shortstop through high school, Krehbiel could have gone either way, he said. But he was advised by a Los Angeles Angels scout to pitch, and he took the advice. He was originally drafted into the Angel organization in 2011.

Krehbiel said he aims at "playing good ball, day in and day out," and aspires "to be a good person on and off the field."

The Visalia Rawhide started their season at home on April 9. The team will play 140 games within California this year. The team returns home on Thursday, April 23 to play Stockton.

For tickets and information, see rawhidebaseball.com or call 732-4433.

## COS Swim and Dive Speeding Toward a Goal

**Stefan Barros**

The College of the Sequoias swim and dive team has just finished its regular season and is now going into the NorCal and State meets. COS expects to be well represented at those meets and that has to do with the speed of the entire team.

COS head coach Kyler Marcelino credits the fact that his team has a lot of speed in the pool as major factor in their success this season. There is one swimmer specifically Marcelino mentioned when discussing speed.

"One of our freshman, Morgan Fain, is extremely fast. She will qualify for the state meet. She's really a standout and a surprise for us this year," he said.

Another reason for the success of the team this year is its depth.

"We have a large team with 32 athletes," said Marcelino, "which is very large for COS. It's a large number for any junior college."

Marcelino has seen steady growth from his group as the season has progressed, and because of that he has big expectations for his team at the state meet.

"We are looking strong for taking state. There are poised divers that will be competing at state," he said. "We have grown. We have freshmen doing really well in their first events in college. They are a focused team and are good kids."

Marcelino elaborated on what his team has done very well with so far.

"Our speed is our main strength," he said. "A lot of them have above average speed in the pool. Another strength is our freshman numbers, the amount of freshmen we have on the team."

Community outreach was a big part of Marcelino's recruiting pitch for freshman this year.

"I really wanted to step up the efforts to educate the public of a swim team at COS," he said. "I'm hoping to build a team that makes people aware of our program."

Other than the success of Fain, Marcelino has had some other surprises over the course of the season, and it was one meet in particular that caught his attention.

"We competed in a tri-meet vs. Merced College and Cuesta College at COS, and we beat both schools with the boys and girls. It was something that we really wanted win, and we won, we also wanted to go on and win the Valley Conference," he said.

`There have also been some other standouts besides Fain, and Marcelino noted three in particular that have had stellar seasons.

"We have Jessica Prestridge, who competes in the backstroke and butterfly," he said. "Another one is Austin Buckhalter, who is from Hanford and competes in the butterfly. The last name is Zach Peltzer, from Golden West, who will qualify for state and is only a freshman."

There are some aspects that the team can work on, and Marcelino believes that this is a bad habit started at the high school level.

"Technique is something that needs to be worked on, and it may not be taught correctly in high school," he said. "They can also work more on breathing correctly when they come up for air out of the pool."

Marcelino has tried to put his imprint on this team with his coaching style. There have been certain aspects that he has tried to stress in order to see his team reach its full potential. There is one thing that he sees as very important to the success of a swimmer/diver.

"Practice time is key," he said. The last 10 percent of practice is the most important. If you work your hardest in the first 90 percent of practice, you will be able to do it for that last 10. In practice you need to focus on stroke, and body movements. It needs to be 110 percent effort from start to finish."

## West Hills College Rodeo Team Finishes Third at Home and Competes in Fresno

The West Hills College Coalinga Men and Women's Rodeo teams resumed the second half of the 2014-15 season at the WHCC rodeo arena.

Seven teams from the West Coast Region of the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association, including Coalinga, competed in several different events over the two days with the championship round on March 21.

WHCC's men team finished third overall with several notable performances from Edgar Machado in tie down, steer wrestling and team roping events, Jacob Lees in bareback riding and Jose Machado in team roping.

The women's team was also successful, with several members qualifying for the championship round. Cierra Hubbard qualified for the final round in goat tying, Kyle Smith qualified for barrel racing and Autumn Israel qualified for team roping.

"I want to thank the whole community for all the continued support," said rodeo coach Justin Hampton.

WHCC competed against teams from WHCC, Feather River College, Lassen Community College, California State University Fresno, Cuesta College, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas during the rodeo.

The WHCC teams traveled to Fresno for another college rodeo event at Fresno State's spring rodeo the day after wrapping up their home event.

In Fresno, Jacob Lees finished 2nd in bareback riding, Pedro Montes finished 4th in team roping and several other team members made it into the championship round. Autumn Israel and Peter Rincon entered the final round for team roping and Finn Costa advanced for steer wrestling.

The teams will next compete at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo April 16-18 and will wrap up the year at University of Nevada, Las Vegas April 24-25.

# Health

## VMC Enhances Imaging Technology

**Staff Reports**

The physician-owners of Visalia Medical Clinic have invested in a new 64-slice CT scanner that produces high-quality diagnostic images at a much lower radiation exposure.

The Siemens SOMATOM Perspective 64 scanner provides highly detailed vascular imaging and fast scanning speed, which makes the imaging experience more comfortable for patients.

VMC also offers the latest in MRI technology, with the top-of-the-line Siemens Magnatom Aera 1.5 T, which produces high-quality images and greater patient comfort.

Under the leadership of radiologists Caroline Millar, MD, and Darrin Smith, MD, VMC's imaging department also offers mammography, bone density dexa scan, fluoroscopy, vascular studies and ultrasound imaging.

"VMC offers patients the advantage of two full-time radiologists who work together, review exams, talk with the referring physician and talk personally to patients," Dr. Smith noted. "Our primary motivation is to ensure that patients get the right care."

Visalia Medical Clinic offers the expertise of more than 50 physicians. VMC also offers an on-site lab, extended hours through the QuickCare walk-in clinic, a Sleep Disorders Center and an Allergy and Sinus Center, all in one location at 5400 W. Hillsdale, Visalia. The clinic is open Monday through Friday 8am to 5pm; with extended and weekend hours at QuickCare. For information, call 739-2000 or visit www.vmchealth.com.

## Kaweah Delta Porterville Dialysis Set to Host April 28 Health Event

**Staff Reports**

Kaweah Delta Porterville Dialysis will host a community health event offering a variety of free screenings and more on Tuesday, April 28.

The event is set to take place from 4-7pm at Kaweah Delta Porterville Dialysis, 385 N. Pearson Ave. It is an important one for Tulare County residents, says Tariq Javed, M.D., medical director of Kaweah Delta Porterville Dialysis. The area continues to exceed state averages for rates of diabetes.

"This is an opportunity for people to be in charge of their ship and learn about what they can do to prevent diabetes or better manage their disease," he said.

The event will provide education about kidney health, diabetes awareness and overall wellness. Additionally, attendees will have the opportunity to get the following free screenings: blood pressure, body mass index and glucose. A free foot screening will also be offered. People with diabetes should have at least one a year because they are at risk of developing foot problems such numbness or weakness, an inadequate blood supply to an organ or part of the body and foot deformities.

For 30 years, Kaweah Delta Porterville Dialysis has provided service to the community of Porterville. This 18-chair, two-bed center provides hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, and blood transfusions with state-of-the-art technology and a nurse to patient ratio of 1 to 5. The dialysis center's machines increase patient comfort by allowing precise water removal during dialysis. Additionally, the center has devices that are built into dialysis machines that help prevent patients from experiencing low blood pressure during dialysis and the side effects that can accompany it.

Kaweah Delta Porterville Dialysis is open from 4:30am to 10:30pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; 4:30am to 6pm on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. For more information, call 781-5551.

## New Fitness Trail Honors Exeter Native Tim Tashjian

**Staff Reports**

Late Exeter native and prominent businessperson Tim Tashjian will be honored with a new trail at Kaweah Oaks Preserve to be named permanently in his memory, preserve owner Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT) announced.

The Timothy Blaine Tashjian Deep Creek Fitness Trail, currently under construction, will feature a variety of fitness stations for use by the public, thanks to a major gift from daughter Hayley Tashjian to SRT, the Visalia-based nonprofit land trust. The workout stations will be situated along Deep Creek, which forms the preserve's northern boundary. The feature will be situated on 22 acres which SRT purchased in 2014 from the Hesse farming family, following a successful $552,000 capital campaign.

The elder Tashjian – a Fresno State graduate who became a prominent Exeter and Ivanhoe area citrus farmer, real estate broker and investor until his untimely death at age 56 in 2012 – was a standout athlete, in baseball and tennis, playing baseball at College of the Sequoias under coach Bert Holt. For the younger Tashjian, 26, her father's appreciation for both athletics and nature inspired the gift.

"I had been thinking about how to honor him since his passing. Because my dad was so into sports and was an avid outdoorsman, a fitness trail in a forest near our hometown of Exeter seemed like a truly fitting way to remember him while helping support the important conservation mission of Kaweah Oaks Preserve and SRT," Tashjian said.

SRT Director of Development Diane Hayes said, Tashjian's contribution is easily the largest gift to SRT by a twenty-something in the land trust's history.

"Hayley's gift is all the more poignant because she is making it in memory of her father, creating a lasting legacy. In remembering her family member, she has become part of the SRT family, and we're so happy she's with us now," Hayes said.

The trail will adjoin the eventual restoration of the native species forest along the creek. It will be under construction into 2016, but will be dedicated at SRT's annual Evening Under the Oaks fundraiser this October.

For information about additional trail and feature naming opportunities, call (559) 738-0211, ext.118.

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# Farming Families Display Their Treasures at California Antique Farm Equipment Show

**Nancy Vigran**

For many California families, farming is in their blood. Some modern-day famers cannot wait to see the newest updates for their tractors and equipment. Others long for the days they spent watching their grandfather farm on the old John Deere, Ford or International.

Such is the case for the Watte and Ramos families.

In fact, it was George Watte and Robbie Soults, who attended an antique farm equipment show in Southern California and returned with the idea for Tulare. Thus, the California Antique Farm Equipment Show started in 1992 with Watte as chairman for the first two years.

Now, more than 20 years later, Walter Watte, George's nephew, and other members of the family continue the tradition, displaying every year and spending the weekend at the show.

"I got the bug from my uncle," Walter Watte said.

While he is not a farmer, like much of the rest of the family, Watte remembers his grandfather, father and uncles working on the farm and riding the family tractors.

He displays three John Deere tractors and a Doodlebug, a family-made tractor, converted from a Model A car as a shop project in high school, by his grandfather, Oscar Watte.

While retired from the military and working in a military-related business, Watte said, "There is definitely agriculture in my blood."

The Watte family tractors are kept in tip-top condition year-round, and driven in parades and displayed often, as Watte also belongs to an antique farm equipment club.

Tony Ramos has been displaying tractors at the show for nearly 10 years. This year he plans on bringing eight tractors, and various implements and tools.

Walter Watte and his wife, Christine, drive the family Doodebug tractor each year at the California Antique Farm Equipment Show in Tulare. The tractor was built in 1939 by Watte's grandfather as a high school shop project. Photo courtesy Walter Watte

Sarah Watte, daughter of Walter Watte, drives a John Deere Model B purchased in 1946, which was used on the Watte farm to harvest alfalfa. Photo courtesy Walter Watte

"It has become an insidious disease," he said.

"I love the people and I love the heritage," he added, "and it connects me to my youth.

"My father, who I lost when I was 19, taught me to farm with these tractors."

Ramos, now an almond grower, has been displaying his 1945 Farmall H since 2006; it, and all of his tractors, are kept in exhibition condition.

"All of them have a story behind them," he said.

He works on them at least once a week in his shop, and has a retired mechanic who helps with the engines, and a retired auto painter who keeps their paint jobs in excellent condition, he said.

Both Watte and Ramos are volunteers for the show and the World Ag Expo as well.

The Antique Farm Equipment show runs Friday, April 17 – Sunday, April 19. There will be a tractor parade Saturday and Sunday mornings at 9am. More than 400 exhibitors will display their antique farm equipment; other antiques and boutique items will be available for sale at the swap meet area. Saturday at 10am an antique farm equipment auction takes place.

Friday night features a fried chicken dinner, Saturday night a pork chop dinner, and Sunday morning a pancake breakfast. The hours are Friday and Saturday 8am-5pm; Sunday, 8am-3pm. Tickets are $5/each and children under 12 are offered free admission. Meals are extra.

Other events include the Dutch-Oven and Rib Cook-off, the 5K Dairy Run and Cow Plop Bingo.